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DIME NOVELS



THE YELLOW CHIEF.

BY CAPTAIN MAYNE REID.

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Hand-books for Young People.


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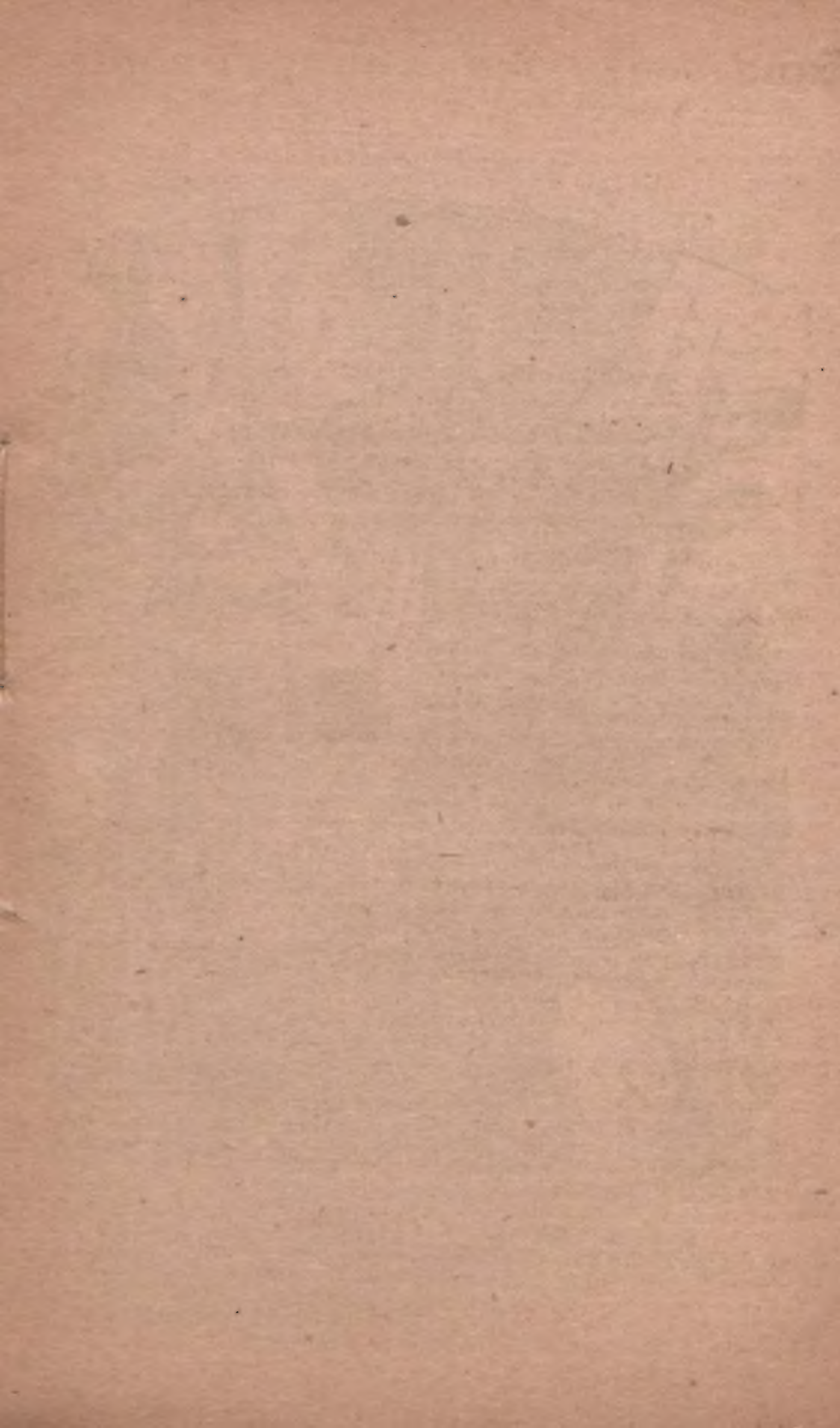
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THE
YELLOW CHIEF.

A ROMANCE OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

BY CAPT. MAYNE REID,

Author of the following Dime Novels:

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THE YELLOW CHIEF.

CHAPTER I.

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE PUMP.

"To the pump with him! and see that he has a double dose of it!"

The words were spoken in a tone of command, earnest and angry. They were addressed to the overseer of a cotton-plantation not far from Vicksburg, in the State of Mississippi, the speaker being Blount Blackadder, a youth aged eighteen, and son to Squire Blackadder, the owner of the plantation.

Who was to receive the double douche?

Near by stood a personage to whom the words evidently pointed. He was also a youth, not very different in either age or size from him who had given the order; though his tawny skin and short crisped hair bespoke him of a different race—in short, a mulatto. And the time—for it is a tale of twenty years ago—along with other attendant circumstances, proclaimed him a slave of the plantation.

And why ordered to be thus served? As a punishment, of course.

You may smile at the idea, and deem it a joke. But the "punishment of the pump" is one of the most severe that can be inflicted; far more so than either the bastinado, or castigation by the lash. A man may writhe while his back is being scored by the cowskin; but that continuous stream of cold water, at first only refreshing, becomes after a time almost unendurable, and the victim feels as though his skull were being split open with an ax.

What had "Blue Dick"—the plantation sobriquet of the young mulatto—what had he done to deserve such chastisement?

The overseer, hesitating to inflict it, put this question to Blount Blackadder.

"That's my business, and not yours, Mr. Snively. Enough

when I say, he has deserved it ; and darn me if he don't have it. To the pump with him !"

"Your father won't be pleased about it," pursued the overseer. "When he comes home——"

"When he comes home ; that's my affair. He's not at home now, and during his absence I'm master of this plantation, I guess. I hope, sir, you'll recognize me as such."

"Oh, sartinly," grumbled the overseer.

"Well, then, I've only to tell you that the nigger's got to be punished. He's done enough to deserve it. Let that satisfy you ; and for the rest I'll be answerable to my father."

What Blue Dick had done the young planter did not condescend to explain. Nor was it his passion that rendered him reticent ; but a secret consciousness that he was himself in the wrong, and acting from motives of the meanest revenge.

They had their origin in jealousy. There was a quadroon girl upon the plantation to whose smiles Blue Dick had aspired. But they were also coveted by his young master—the master of both.

In such a rivalry the end is easily told. The honest love of Blue Dick was doomed to a harsh disappointment ; for Sylvia, the quadroon, had yielded her heart less to the dictates of natural partiality, than to the combined influence of vanity and power. It was a tale oft told in those days of the so-styled patriarchal institution—happily now at an end.

Maddened by the discovery of his sweetheart's defection, the young mulatto could not restrain himself from recrimination. A collision had occurred between him and his master's son. There had been words and threatened blows, quickly succeeded by the scene we are describing.

Mr. Snively was not the man to hold out long against the threats of authority. His place was too precious to be risked by an act of idle chivalry. What to him was the punishment of a slave : a ceremony at which he was accustomed to assist almost every day of his life ? Besides, he had no particular liking for Blue Dick, who was regarded by him as a "sassy fellow." Assured against blame from Squire Blackadder, he was only too ready to cause execution of the order. He proceeded to do so.

The scene was transpiring in an open courtyard to the rear

of the "big nouse," adjoining also to the stables. On one side stood the pump, a tall obelisk of oak, with its massive arm of iron, and spout five feet above the level of the pavement. Underneath traversed a trough, the hollowed trunk of a tree, designed for the watering of the horses.

In the hot summer sun of the Mississippi valley it should have been a sight to give gladness to the eye. Not so with the slaves on Squire Blackadder's plantation. To them it was more suggestive of sadness and fear; and they were accustomed to regard it with the same feelings as one who looks upon a gallows, or a guillotine. More than half their number had, one time or another, sat under that spout till its chilly jet seemed like a sharp spear piercing their wool-covered crania.

The punishment of the pump was too frequent on Squire Blackadder's plantation to need minute directions as to the mode of administering it. Mr. Snively had only to repeat the order received, to some half-dozen stalwart slaves, who stood around ready to execute it. The more ready, that Blue Dick was now to be the victim; for, even with these, the mulatto youth was far from being a favorite. Full of conceit on account of his clearer skin, he had always shown himself too proud to associate with them, and was thus deprived of their sympathies. It was his first punishment, too; for, although he had often before offended in a different way, Squire Blackadder had refrained from chastising him.

It was thought strange by all, though none knew the reason; and this immunity of which he had been accustomed to boast, rendered his now threatened punishment a thing for his fellow slaves to rejoice at.

They who were ordered to administer it, went about their work with a will. At a sign from the overseer, Blue Dick was seized by two of the field hands, and dragged up to the pump. With cords procured from the adjacent stable, he was lashed to the trough in such a position that his crown came directly under the spout, eighteen inches below it. By stays stretching right and left, his head was so confined that he could not turn it an inch one way or the other. To have attempted moving it, would have been to tighten the noose, by which the rope was rove around his neck.

"Now, give him his shower-bath!" vociferated young

Blackadder to the huge negro who stood by the handle of the pump.

The man, a savage-looking monster, who had himself more than once been submitted to a similar ducking, obeyed the order with a gleeful grin. The iron lever, rattling harsh upon its pivot, moved rapidly up and down; the translucent jet shot forth from the spout, and fell plashing upon the skull beneath.

The bystanders laughed, and to the victim it would yet have been only pleasant play; but among those who were jeering him was Sylvia the quadroon! All were abroad—both the denizens of the negro quarter, and the domestics of the house—spectators of his suffering and his shame.

Even Clara Blackadder, the sister of his tyrant torturer—a young lady of about twenty summers, with all the seeming graces of an angel—stood on the back porch contemplating the scene with as much indifference as if, from the box of a theater, she had been looking upon some mere spectacle of the stage!

If she felt interest in it, it arose from no sympathy with the sufferer.

On the face of her brother was an expression of interest vivid and pronounced. His features bespoke joy—the joy of a malignant soul indulging in revenge.

It was a sad picture, that presented by these two young men—the one exulting in despotic power, the other suffering torture through its exercise. It was but the old and oft-repeated tableau of master and slave.

And yet they were strangely alike, both in form and feature. With the ochereous tint extracted from his skin, and the curl combed out of his hair, Blue Dick might have passed for a brother of Blount Blackadder. He would have been a little better looking, and certainly showing a countenance of less sinister cast.

Perhaps not at that moment; for as the agony of physical pain became added to the mental anguish he was enduring, his features assumed an expression truly diabolical. Even the jet of water, spreading like a veil over them, did not hide from the spectators the fiend-like glance with which he regarded his oppressor. Through the diaphanous sheet they

could see white lips tightly compressed against whiter teeth, that grinned defiance and vengeance, as his eyes rested on Sylvia. He uttered no groan; neither did he stir for mercy, though the torture he was enduring caused him to wriggle within his ropes, at the risk of their snapping him.

There were few present who did not know that he was suffering extreme pain, and many of them from sympathy. And it was only when one of these, stirred by vivid remembrances, ventured to utter some slight words of expostulation, that the punishment was suspended.

"He's half enough, I reckon?" said Snively, turning interrogatively toward the young planter.

"No, I ain him! not half enough," was the reply; "you haven't given him the double. But never mind! It'll do for the present. Next time he offends in like manner, he shall be pumped upon till his thick skull splits like a cedar rail!"

Saying this, Blount Blackadder turned carelessly upon his heel, and went off to join his sister in the porch—leaving the overseer to release the sufferer at his discretion.

The iron handle discontinued its harsh grating; the cruel spirit ceased to pour; and Blue Dick, disengaged from his torture, was carried fainting to the stable.

But he was never again subjected to the punishment of the pump. The young planter did not have a chance to carry out his threat. Three days after, Blue Dick disappeared from the plantation. And on the morning of that day, almost simultaneous with his disappearance, was found the body of the gentle young girl Sylvia, at the bottom of the peach orchard, her head split open to the chin!

It had been done by the blade of a wood-lax. There was no mystery about the matter—no speculation as to the author of the deed. The antecedent circumstances pointed directly to Blue Dick; and he was at once sought for.

Sought for, but not found. As soon as the human body had gone abroad, the surrounding settlers, planters as well as poor whites, springing to their arms, and into their saddles. The bloodhounds were put upon Blue Dick's track; but spite their keen scent for such game, and the energetic urging of their owners, they never set flag in the flesh of the man who murdered.

CHAPTER II.

THE BLACKADDERS.

IN the time preceding the extinction of slavery, there was a part of the United States where its evil was so general, that in that region lying along the lower Mississippi, known as the "Coast." More especially was this true of the State of Mississippi itself. In the other territories, east of the Allegheny range, the "institution" was tempered with a touch of the patriarchal; and the same might be said of Kentucky and Tennessee. Even in parts of Louisiana the mild, influential blood of the Creole had a softening influence on the condition of the slave. But it was different on the great cotton and sugar plantations of the Mississippi, as also portions of the Louisiana coast; many of whose owners were only half the year residents, and where the management of the negro was intrusted to the overseer—an irresponsible, and, in many cases, severe taskmaster. And among the owners themselves was a large number—the majority in fact—not born upon the soil; and colonists from all countries, who had gone thither, often with broken fortunes, and not uncommonly characters as well.

By these men the slave was only looked upon as so much live-stock; and it was not a question either of his happiness or welfare, but the work to be got out of him.

It would be a mistake to say that Mississippian planters were all of this class; as it would be also erroneous to suppose that Southern masters in general were less humane than other men. There is no denying them a certain generosity of character; and many among them were patriots of the first class. It was the institution itself that caused them; and, brought up under its influence, they thought and acted wrongly; but not worse, I fear, than you or I would have done had we been living under the same laws.

Undoubtedly, humane men were exceptions among planters of the lower Mississippi; and so bad was the reputation of this section of the South, that to have threatened a Virginia

negro—on even one of Kentucky or Tennessee—with sale or expansion thither, was sufficient at any time to make him contented with his task!

The word "coast" was the *baggy* of negro boyhood, and the terror of his manhood.

Planter Blackadder, originally from the State of Delaware, was among the men who had contributed to this evil reputation. He had migrated to Mississippi at an early period of his life, making a purchase of some cheap land on a tract owned by the Choctaws. A poor man at the period of his migration, he had never risen to a high rank among the planter aristocracy of the State. But just for this reason did he avail himself of what appeared, to a mind like his, the real principle of the order—a despotic bearing toward the sub-servant negroes whose evil star had guided them into his hands. In the case of many of them, their own evil character had something to do in conducting them thither; for planter Blackadder was accustomed to buy his negroes cheap, and his "stock" was regarded as one of the worst, in the section of country in which his plantation was "located." Despite their bad repute, however, there was work in them; and no man knew better than Squire Blackadder how to take it out. If their sense of duty was not sufficient to keep them to their tasks, there was a lash to hinder them from lagging: he never ready in the hands of a man who had no disposition to spare it. This was Snively, the overseer, who, like the squire himself, hailed from Delaware State.

Upon the Blackadder plantation was punishment enough, and of every kind known to the skin of the negro. At times there was even mutilation—of the mildest type—extending beneath his skin. If Pomp or Skip tried to escape work by scratching a toothache, the tooth was instantly extracted, though not the slightest sign of decay might be detected in the "ivory!"

Under such rigid discipline, the Blackadder plantation should have thrived, and its owner become a wealthy man. No doubt he would have done so, but for an accident on the other side, that, dissipating the profits, kept him comparatively poor.

The "sweep-pipe" was the squire's own and only one

Blount, who had grown up what is termed a wild fellow. He was not only wild, but wicked; and what, perhaps, grieved his father far more, he had of late years become ruinously expensive. He kept low company, preferring the "white trash"; fought cocks, and played "poker" with them in the woods; and, in a patronizing way, attended all the "candy pullings" and "blanket trampings" for ten miles around.

The squire could not be otherwise than indulgent to a youth of such tastes, who was his only son and heir. In boyhood's days he had done the same himself. For this reason his purse-strings, held tight against all others, were loosened to his hopeful son Blount, even to aiding him in his evil courses. He was less generous to his daughter Clara, a girl gifted with great beauty, as also endowed with many of those moral graces so becoming to woman. True, it was she who had stood in the porch while Blue Dick was undergoing the punishment of the pump. And it is true, also, that she exhibited but slight sympathy with the sufferer. Still was there something to palliate this apparent hardness of heart: she was not fully aware of the terrible pain that was being inflicted; and it was her father's fault, not hers, that she was accustomed to witness such scenes weekly, almost daily. Under other tutelage, Clara Blackadder might have grown up a young lady, good as she was graceful: and under other circumstances been happier than she was on the day she was **seen to such disadvantage.**

That, at this time, a cloud overshadowed her fate, was evident from that overshadowing her face; for, on looking upon it, no one could mistake its expression to be other than **sadness.**

The cause was simple, as it is not uncommon. The lover of her choice was not the choice of her father. A youth, poor in purse, but rich in almost every other quality to make man esteemed—of handsome person, and mind adorned with rare cultivation—a stranger in the land—in short, a young Irishman, who had strayed into Mississippi, nobody knew wherefore or when. Such was he who had won the friendship of Clara Blackadder, as the enmity both of her brother and father.

In heart accepted by her—though her lips dared not

declare it—he was rejected by them, in words scornful, almost insulting.

They were sufficient to drive him away from the State; for the girl, constrained by parental authority, had not spoken plain enough to retain him. And he went, as he had come, no one knew whither; and perhaps only Clara Blackadder cared.

As she stood in the porch, she was thinking more of him than the punishment that was being inflicted on Blue Dick; and not even on the day after, when her maid Cynthia was discovered dead under the trees, did the dread spectacle drive from her thoughts the remembrance of a man lodged there for life!

As the overseer had predicted, Squire Blackadder, on his return home, was angry at the chastisement that had been inflicted on Blue Dick, and horrified on hearing of the tragedy that succeeded it.

The sins of his own earlier life seemed rising in retribution against him!

CHAPTER III.

A CHANGED PLANTATION.

WE pass over a period of five years succeeding the scene recorded.

During this time there was but little change on the plantation of Squire Blackadder; either in the dwellers on the estate or the administration of its affairs. Neither castigation by the cow-skin, nor the punishment of the pump, was discontinued. Both were frequent and severe as ever; and whatever of work could by such means be extracted from human muscles, was taken out of the unhappy slaves, who called Mr. Snively their "obee-ee-ee." Withal, the plantation did not prosper. Blackadder, plunging yet deeper into dissipation, drained it of every dollar of its profits, intrenching even on the standard value of the estate. The number of its hands had become reduced, till there was scarce enough left for its cultivation;

and despite the constant croaking of Mr. Satchel's wailing words began to show themselves in the cotton fields, and to decay around the "gin-house."

At the end of these five years, however, came a change, complete as it was cheerful.

The buildings underwent repair, "big house" as well as out-offices; while the crops, once more carefully cultivated, presented a flourishing appearance. In the courtyard and negro-quarters the change was still more striking. Instead of sullen faces, and skins gray with dirt and half, or browned with dirt, ill-concealed under the tattered coppery strips, could now be seen smiling countenances, with clean white shirts covering an epidermis that shone with the lustre of health. Instead of profane language and foul threats, now often followed by the lash, could be heard the swelling of the banjo, accompanied by its simple song, and the cheerful voice of Sambo excited in "chaff, or light hearted laughter."

The change is easily explained. It was not the same Satchel, nor the same "obscure," nor yet the same master. The whole *personnel* of the place was different. A peer of the patriarchal type had succeeded to the tyrant; and Square Backelder was gone away, few of his neighbors knew a whitther, and fewer cared. By his cruelty he had lost all, as by the courses pursued by his son—the latter having almost brought him to bankruptcy. To escape this, he had sold his plantation, though still retaining his slaves—most of them being unsalable on account of their well-known wickedness.

Taking these along with him, he had "started west."

To one emigrating from the banks of the Mississippi this may seem an unfitting expression. But at the time a new "west" and a "far" one had just entered on the stage of civilization. It was called California, a country at that time little known; for it had late come into the possession of the United States, and the report of its golden treasures, although on the way, had not yet reached the meridian of the Mississippi.

It was its grand agricultural wealth, worth far more than its auriferous mines, that was attracting people to the fertile plains—their and the necessity of escaping from the tax

respectable society that had sprung up around him in the "Choctaw Purchase."

He had not taken departure alone. Three or four other families, not very dissimilar either in circumstances or character, had gone off along with him.

Let us follow upon their track. Though three months have elapsed since their leaving the eastern side of the Mississippi, we shall be in time to overtake them: for they are still wending their slow and weary way across the grand prairie.

The picture presented by an emigrating party is one long since become common; yet never can it be regarded without a feeling of interest. It appeals to a pleasant sentiment, recalling the earliest, and perhaps most romantic period of our history. The huge Conestoga wagon, with its canvas tilt lashed to a snowy whiteness by many a storm of rain, not inappropriately styled the "ship of the prairie"; its miscellaneous load of tools and utensils, with house-furniture and other treasures, keeping alive the remembrance of the home left behind, still more readily brought to mind by those dear faces and lit under the screening canvas; the sun tanned and tattered horse-men, with guns on shoulder, riding in advance or behind; and if a Southern migration, the sable cohort trailing its slow accompaniment, all combine to form a tableau that once seen will ever be remembered.

And just such a picture was that presented by the migrating party of Mississippi planters, *en route* for far California. It was a "caravan" of the smaller kind—only six wagons in all—with eight or ten white men for its escort. The journey was full of danger, and they knew this who had undertaken it. But their characters had hindered them from increasing their number; and, in the case of more than one, the danger had been almost as much decided as any that might be before them.

I am now following one of the old "trails" of the traders, at that time the only one used by the emigrants, and especially those from the Southern States. It was the route running from the Arkansas to Bent's Fort, and thence striking northward along the base of the Rocky Mountains to the pass known as "Bridger's."

At that time the pass and the trails on both sides of it, were reported "safe." That is, safe by comparison. The Indians had been awed by a sight unusual to them—the passage through their territory of large bodies of United States troops—Doniphan's expedition to New Mexico, with those of Cooke and Kearney to California. For a short interval it had restrained them from their attacks upon the traders' caravan; even from the assassination of the lonely trapper.

As none of Blackadder's party was either very brave, or very reckless, they were proceeding with great caution, keeping scouts in the advance by day, and guards around the camp by night.

And thus, watchful and wary, had they reached Bent's Fort in safety. Thence an Indian hunter who chanced to be hanging around the fort—a Choctaw who spoke a little English—was engaged to conduct them northward to the Pass; and, resuming their journey under his guidance, they had reached Bijou Creek, a tributary of the Platte, and one of the most beautiful streams of prairie land.

They had formed their encampment for the night, after the fashion practiced upon the prairies—with the wagons locked tongue and wheel, inclosing a hollow space—the *corral*—so called after a word brought by the prairie-merchants from New Mexico.

The travelers were more than usually cheerful. The great chain of the Rocky Mountains was in sight, with Long's Peak raising its snow-covered summit, like a vast beacon star to welcome, and show them the way, into the land of promise that lay beyond it.

They expected, moreover, to reach St. Vrain's Fort, by the evening of the next day; where, safe from Indian attack, and relieved from camp watching, they could once more rest and recruit themselves.

But in that hour of relaxation, while they were looking at Long's Peak, its snowy crown still gilded by the rays of the setting sun, there was a cloud coming from that same quarter that threatened to overwhelm them.

It was not the darkening of the night, nor mist from the mountain-sides; but a dusky shadow more to be feared than either.

They had no fear of it. They neither saw, nor knew of its existence; and, as they gathered around their camp-fire to make their evening repast, they were as gay as such men might be expected to be, under similar circumstances.

To many of them it was the last meal they were ever destined to eat; as was that night the last of their lives. Before another sun shone upon Long's Peak, one-half their number was sleeping the sleep of death—their *corrals* wagons inclosing a space afterward to become their cemetery.

CHAPTER IV.

A PAINTED PARTY.

ABOUT five miles from the spot upon which the emigrants were encamped, and almost at the same hour, another party had pitched their tents upon the plain.

There was not the slightest resemblance between the two sets of travelers, either in personal appearance, in the language spoken, or in their camp-equipments.

The latter were all horse-men, unincumbered with wagons, and without even the impediment of tents.

On dismounting they had simply staked their horses on the grass, and lain down upon their buffalo-robes, that were to serve them both as shelter and for couches.

There were about two score of them in all; and all without exception were men. Not a woman or child was among them. They were young men too; though to this there were several exceptions.

To have told the color of their skins it would have been necessary to submit them to ablation: since that portion of it, not covered by a breech-cloth with leaping contrivances of leather, was so resplendent with paint that not a spot of the natural tint could be detected.

After this, it is scarce necessary to say, that they were Indians; or to add that their painted bodies, nude from neck to waist, proclaimed them "on the war-trail."

There were other evidences of this, in the manner in which they were armed. Most of them carried *guns*. On a hunting excursion they would have had bows and arrows—the prairie tribes prefer these weapons in the chase. They had their spears, too, slung lance-fashion by the side of the saddle; with tomahawks stuck in their belts. All of them were furnished with the *lazo*.

Among them was one sufficiently conspicuous, to be at once recognized as their chief. His superior dress and equipment told of his title to this distinction; while there was that in his bearing toward the others, that placed it beyond doubt. They seemed not only to fear, but respect him; as if something more than the accident of hereditary rank gave him a claim to command them.

And he on his side seemed to rule them; not despotically, but with a firmness of tone and bearing that brooked no disobedience. On alighting from his horse on the spot selected for their camp, the animal was unsaddled by another, and taken away to the pasturing place; while the chief himself, donning a splendid cloak of white wolf-skins, spread it on the grass, and lay down upon it. Then taking a pipe from his embroidered pouch, and lighting it, he seemed to give himself up to solitary meditation—as if he had no need to take any further trouble about the affairs of the camp, and none of the others would venture to intrude upon his privacy.

None did, save his immediate attendants; who brought him his supper, after it had been prepared, and assisted also in arranging his sleeping-place.

Between him and his attendants not a word was exchanged, and only a few with one of the others. They related to setting the camp sentinels, with some instructions about a scout that might be expected to come in during the night.

After that the chief stretched himself down his robe, re-filled the pipe with fresh tobacco, taken from his pouch, and for some time lay smoking with his eyes fixed upon the moon. Her light, resplendent in the pure atmosphere of the upland prairies, falling upon him, displayed a figure of fine proportions—involving both largeness and strength.

As to the face, nothing could have been told of it, even if it had been seen under sunlight. Stained with vermillion on a

ground of ochraceous earth, with strange devices on forehead and cheeks, it resembled a painted esurient more than a human face. The features, however, showing a certain rotundity, told them to be those of a young man, who, but for the disfiguring of the paint, might have appeared handsome.

Still, there was something in his eyes, as they glanced under the silvery moonlight—that betrayed an evil disposition. No water could have been read out of them that cast at once sinister and sad.

It was strange that so youthful—for he seemed certainly not over twenty—could have obtained such control over the turbulent spirits around him. One and all of them, though also young, were evidently of this character. He was either the son of some chief long and universally venerated, or a youthful brave who had performed feats of valor entitling him to respect.

The band, over which he exercised sway, could be only an expeditionary party belonging to some one of the large prairie tribes; and the number composing it pointed to its being one of those roving troops of young and reckless braves, often encountered upon the plains—the terror of trappers and trappers.

There was something unusual in this chief of youthful men, keeping apart from his companions, and holding them in such control.

While they were encamping around their camp-fire, he was quietly smoking his pipe; and after they had gone to sleep, he was still seen lying wide awake upon his wolf-skins!

It was a singular place in which he and his followers had encamped; a spot romantically picturesque. It was in a gorge or glen forming a flat meadow of about six acres in extent, and covered with grass of the short grama species. It was inclosed on three sides by a bluff rising sheer up from the plain, and bisected by the finest of streams, whose water spouted like over the precipice, with a fall of some twenty feet. On the side open toward the east could be obtained a clear view of the prairie, extending away to the banks of Big Horn Creek. When the moon shined down on the soft grassy sward; the Indian horses grouped and grazing on it; the war horses galloping upon their heels, the stream glittering like

a serpent as it swept silently past them; the cascade sparkling above; and around the dark framing of cliffs; you have a picture of Rocky Mountain life, that, though rare to you, is common to those who have traversed that region of romance.

It did not appear to have any charm for the young chief, who lay stretched upon the wolf-skins. Evidently thinking of something else, he took no note of the scenery around him, farther than now and then to raise himself upon his elbow, and gaze for a time toward that portion of it that was least picturesque; the monotonous surface of the plain stretching eastward. That he was scanning it not for itself, but for something he expected to appear upon it, would have been made manifest to one who could have known his thoughts. Expressed in English they would have run thus:

"Waboga should have been here by this. I wonder what's detaining him. He must have seen our signal, and should know where to find us. May be that moon hinders him from stealing a horse out of their camp. As long as we they ought to trust him to go anywhere. Well, come he or not I shall attack them all the same—this night. Oh! what a sweet vengeance! But the sweeter, if I can only take them alive—one and all. Then indeed shall I have true revenge!

"What can be keeping the Choctaw? I should not have trusted him, but that he speaks the white man's tongue. They'd have suspected any other. He's stupid, and may spoil my plans. I want them—must have them *alive*!

"Now, if he should turn traitor and put them on their guard? Perhaps take them on to the fort? No—no; he would not do that. He hates the white man much as I myself, and with nearly as good reason. Besides, he dare not do *that*. If he did—"

The soliloquy of the recumbent chief was suddenly interrupted, and his thoughts diverted into a different channel, by a sound reaching his ear, that seemed to come from the distant prairie. It was the hoof-stroke of a horse; but so faint, that only a practiced ear could have heard, much less make out what was causing it.

In an instant he had changed his attitude, and lay with cheek closely pressed to the turf. In another instant he muttered to himself:

"A horse—a single horse—must be the Choctaw!"

He raised himself upon his knees and looked out over the plain. A low ridge ran obliquely up to the mouth of the gorge in which the Indians were reposing. There was a clump of bushes upon its crest; and over the tops of these he could perceive a small disk, darker than the foliage. He **knew it had not been there before.**

While he was scanning it, there came, as if out of the bushes, three short barks, followed by a long, lugubrious howl. It seemed the cry of the prairie-wolf. But he knew it was not this; for it was repeated with a different intoning.

Simultaneously with the second utterance, a similar cry was sent back as if in answer. It was the response of the camp-guard, who was keeping watch among the horses. And in this there was an intonation different from either of the others. It was evidently understood by him who had signaled from without, and told him he might safely approach: for the instant after, the dark spot above the bushes was seen moving along behind them; and presently appeared by the side of the clump in the shape of a man on horseback.

It was a horseman in the garb of a white hunter; but the moon falling full upon his face, showed the copper-colored **skin of an Indian.**

He rode forward to the edge of the camp; exchanged some words in a low tone with the horse-guard, that had answered his signal; and then came toward the chief, who had risen to receive him. The salutation told him to be the Choctaw so **impatiently expected.**

"Waboga has delayed long," said the chief, half-reproachfully. "It is now after midnight. He knows we must make **our attack before morning.**"

"The Yellow chief need not be troubled about the time. The sleeping place of the white travelers is near at hand. It will take but an hour to reach it. Waboga was detained **against his will.**"

"Ha! how?"

"The pale-faces had grown suspicious, and watched him. Some trappers, on their way to St. Vrain's fort, came up with the emigrant train after sunrise, and stayed with it till the noon hour. They must have had some thing against the guide.

All day after, Waboga could see that the white men were watching him."

"Then they are not encamped where I wished them?"

"They are. The Yellow chief may rest sure of it. They were not so suspicious as that; but allowed the guide to conduct them to their sleeping-place. It is in the creek bend where Waboga was instructed to take them."

"Good! And their numbers?"

"Nine white men in all—with their women and children. Of the blacks about five times as many—men, squaws, and papposes."

"No matter for them. Describe the whites."

"The chief of the caravan, a man of middle age—a planter. Waboga well knows his kind. He remembers them when a boy dwelling beyond the Big river—in the land of which his people have been despoiled."

"A planter. Any family with him?"

"A son, who has seen some twenty-four summers—like the father in every thing but age; a daughter, grown to a woman—not like either. She is fair as a flower of the prairie."

"It is she—it is they!" muttered the chief to himself, his eyes glistening in the moonlight with an expression at once triumphant and diabolical. "Oh! 'twill be a sweet revenge!"

"Of the other whites," continued the Choctaw, "one is a tall man, who has much to do with the management. He acts under the orders of the planter. He carries a good whip, and often uses it on the shoulders of the black slaves."

"He shall have *his* punishment, too. But not for that. They deserve it."

"The other six white men are—"

"No matter; only tell me how they are armed. Will they make resistance?"

Waboga did not think they would—not much. He believed they would let themselves be taken alive.

"Enough!" exclaimed the Cheyenne chief—for it was to this tribe the Indian belonged. "The time has come. Go wake our warriors, and hold yourself ready to guide us."

Then, turning upon his heel, he commenced gathering up his arms, that lay scattered around the robe on which he had been reposing.

His body-servant, already aroused, was soon in attendance upon him ; while the slumbering warriors, one after another, started from savage dreams, sprung to their feet, and hurried toward their horses.

The best-drilled squadron of light cavalry could not have got half so quickly into their saddles, as did this painted troop of Cheyennes.

In less than ten minutes after receiving the command to march, they were beyond the bounds of their bivouac—equipped for any kind of encounter !

CHAPTER V.

A TRAITOROUS GUIDE.

As already known, the emigrants had *corraled* their wagons on the banks of Bijou Creek.

The spot selected, or rather to which their Indian guide had conducted them, was in a bend of the stream, that looped around the encampment in the shape of a horse's shoe. It possessed an area of some four or five acres of grassy ground—resembling a new-mown meadow.

With an eye to security, it could not, to all appearance, have been better chosen. The creek, running sluggishly around the loop, was deep enough to foil any attempt at fording ; while the narrow, isthmus-like neck could be defended with advantage. It had not been the choice of the travelers themselves, but of their Indian guide ; who, as already stated, had presented himself to them at Bent's fort, and been engaged to conduct them through Bridger's Pass. Sparking the white man's tongue, though but indifferently, and being a Chee-wah, as he declared himself, they had no suspicion of his honesty ; until that very day, when a band of free trappers, who chanced to pass them on the route, and who knew something of the Indian's character, had warned them to beware of him. They had obeyed the warning, so far as lay in the power of men so little acquainted with the

prairies. And how could they suspect a guide, who had chosen for their night's camping-place a spot that seemed the very place for their security? How could they suppose that the deep, slow stream, running silently around them, could have been designed for any other purpose than that of defense? It never entered their minds to suppose it could be intended as a trap. Why should it?"

If any thing could have given them this thought, it would have been what they had heard from the trappers. Some of them had reflected upon the character given of their guide. But more discredited it, believing it to be only ill-will on the part of the whites toward the Indian—like themselves a hunter. Others said it was a trapper joke—a story told to scare them.

There was something odd in the eagerness the Indian had shown in directing them to their present camping-ground. It was some distance from the traveled track, where they had seen other places that appeared sufficiently suitable. Why should he have taken the trouble to bring them to the bend of the creek?

The man who made this reflection was Snively, the overseer. Snively didn't like the look of the "red-skin," though he was a Choctaw, and spoke a little English. That he had come originally from the other side of the Mississippi was no proof of his being honest; for Mr. Snively had no great faith in the integrity of men hailing from the "Choctaw Purchase"—whatever the color of their skin, red, white, or black.

His suspicions about the guide, communicated to his fellow-travelers, were adopted by several of them, though not by their leader. Squire Blackadder scorned the idea of treason, as did also his son.

Why should the Choctaw betray them? It was not as if he had been one of the prairie Indians, and belonged to some predatory band. He was merely a wanderer from his own tribe; who, in the reserve allotted to them west of Arkansas State, were now living as an inoffensive and half-civilized people. He could have no motive in leading them away, but the contrary. He was not to receive his wages for acting as their guide, until after their arrival on the other side of the mountains. A good sum had been promised him

Was it likely he should do any thing to forfeit it? So reasoned Squire Blackadder and several of the emigrants who accompanied him.

Snively and the others were not satisfied; and resolved to keep a sharp eye upon the Indian.

But, watchful as they were from that time forward, they failed to see him, as he slipped out of their camp, near the mid-hour of night, taking along with him one of the best horses belonging to the caravan!

He must have got away by leading the animal for some distance along the edge of the stream, concealed under the shadow of the banks. Otherwise, on the open prairie, with the moon shining down upon its treeless sward, he could not have eluded the vigilance of the camp-guards, one of whom was Snively himself.

It was only by an accident that his departure was discovered, and just before daybreak. The horse he had taken chanced to be a *mare*, that some weeks before had dropped a foal. It was too fine a creature to be left behind upon the prairies, and had been therefore brought along with its dam.

The colt, after a time missing its mother, ran hinnying about, till its cries of distress startled the camp from its slumbers. Then a search on all sides resulted in the universal conviction: that their guide had betrayed them, or, at all events, had stolen off, taking the mare along with him!

There was no more sleep for the eyes of the emigrants. One and all ran wildly around the wagons—the whites meeting each other with cautions and curses, alike contradictory; the blacks—men, women and children—huddling together, and giving voice to their fears in shrieks and chattering.

And, in the midst of this confusion, a dark mass was seen moving across the prairie, upon which the white light of the moon was already becoming blended with that of the gray dawn.

At first it came slowly and silently, as though stealing toward the camp. Then, as if concealment was no longer deemed necessary, the mass broke into a scattered cloud, showing it to be composed of horsemen.

Their tramping sounded upon the turf, at the same time that a wild yell, issuing simultaneously from threescore throats,

struck terror into the hearts of the emigrants. There could be no mistaking that cry. It was the war-whoop of the Cheyennes.

The travelers had no time to reflect upon it: it was the slogan of attack; and before they could think of any plan for defending themselves, the dusky horsemen were upon their hand, swooping down upon them like the breath of a tornado!

The emigrants were not all cowards. Three or four were men of courage, and not the least courageous was Sully, the overseer. Still was it more by a mechanical impulse, than any hope of successfully defending themselves, that they discharged their guns in the faces of the approaching foe.

It did not stay the impetuosity of the charge. Then shots were returned by a volley from the guns of their savage assailants, followed up by a thrusting of spears; and, in less than ten minutes' time, the *corral* was captured.

When the day broke, it disclosed a scene, since then, almost far from infrequent on the prairies. A wagon-train, with its tilts torn down, and the contents strewed around it; the engine that had drawn it along, standing near, and wondering what had befallen it; their owners, in captivity, some of them bound hand and foot, others lying lifeless upon the turf!

Embracing all, a cohort of painted savages; some keeping guard over the captives, others indulging in an uncheck'd Saturnalia; some dead-drunk, others reeling in a state of half-intoxication—each with cup in hand, filled with the fire-water taken from the captured wagons!

Such was the spectacle on Bijou Creek on that morning, when the emigrant train of the ex-Mississippi planter fell into the hands of a war-party of Cheyennes, led by the Yellow Chief.

CHAPTER VI.

TWO TRAPPERS.

THE gorge in which the young Cheyenne chief and his followers had made their night bivouac, was only one of a series of similar glens, that, with short intervals between, reached the foot of the sierra where it edged upon the open plain. It was not the main chain of the Rocky Mountains, but a spur running out into the plain.

About a mile farther along, and nearer to Bijou Creek, was another gorge, not very dissimilar in size, but somewhat different in character. Instead of having an embouchure open to the plain, it was shut in on all sides by bluffs, rising abruptly above it to the height of over a hundred feet.

There was an outlet, nevertheless; where a tiny spring-brook, gurgling forth from the bottom of the encircling cliffs, passed out into the open country, after making its way through a cañon, which it had no doubt cut for itself in the course of countless ages.

But as it needed a cleft no wider than might admit the body of a man, not much wider was it, from top to bottom of the cañon. A traveler might have passed within a hundred yards of its outer face looking toward the plain, without perceiving this breach in the precipice, or taking it only for a fissure in the *façade* of the rocks.

The recessed space inside, in one other respect differed from the open tract that had been occupied by the Indians. Its bottom was thickly timbered by cottonwood and other trees; while along the crevices of the cliffs, and wherever a crevice afforded room for some vegetation, grew *pinons* and the creeping wild cedar.

It seemed a favorable haunt for the owls and bats, but only at night. By day the birds appeared to have left possession of it—marking it with their sweet music, and leaving only the rapturous warble of night, that occasionally "whistled his way" or laughed his maniac laugh "screams" in the cliffs overhead.

Only from the heights above could a view be had of the "hole"; and to get this required climbing, beyond any thing curiosity was likely to encourage. No prairie traveler would have taken the trouble, unless he chanced to be a German geologist, hammer in hand, or a botanist of the same inquiring race, in search of rare plants. Led by the love of science, these simple but ardent explorers go everywhere, into every cranny and corner of the earth—even the "holes" of the Rocky Mountains, where often have their dead bodies been found, with heads stripped of their skins by the knife of the indiscriminating savage.

Ascending the cliff from the outside, and looking down into the gorge described, you might fancy that no human being had ever entered it. To do so would cost some exertion. And some danger too: for there was a hundred feet of precipitous rock to be scaled *downward*, at the risk of getting a broken neck.

Some one had taken this risk, however; for on the same night in which the Cheyenne chief had sallied out to attack the emigrant camp, only a little later and nearer morning, a fire might have been seen glimmering among the cottonwood trees that covered the bottom of the glen.

It could only have been seen from a particular point above, where no one was likely to be straying. On all other sides it was concealed by the thick foliage of the trees, through which its smoke, scattering as it passed upward, became dissipated into thin haze before reaching the crest of the cliffs.

By this fire, far remote from the hearths of civilization, two men were seated, bearing but slight resemblance to each other. One was characteristic of the scene; his costume and accouterments, in short, his *tout-ensemble*, proclaiming him unmistakably a trapper. Hunting-shirt of dressed deerskin, fringed at cape and skirt, leggings of like material, moccasins soled with *parfleche*, and on his head a felt hat, with crown and brim showing long service. His hair, close-cropped, gave little framing to his face, that was naturally dark in color, but darker with dirt, sun-tan and wrinkles. It looked the face of a man who had seen nearly sixty summers, and quite as many winters.

His companion was not over half his age, nor in any way

like the man we have taken for a trapper, although garbed in the costume common to "mountain men." He wore the hunting-shirt, leggings and moccasins; but all were tastefully cut and elaborately embroidered.

It might have been the difference between youth and age; and both may have been trappers alike. Still was there something about the younger man—a delicacy of feature and refinement of manner—very different from those who take to this rude, adventurous calling.

A thought of the kind seemed to have come uppermost in the mind of his older companion, as they sat by their camp-fire just kindled. It still wanted half an hour of sunrise; and they had issued out of their skin lodge, standing close by, to cook their morning meal. It was preparatory to starting out on a tour of inspection to their traps, set overnight in the streams near at hand. A large fitch of buffalo meat, comprising several hump-ribs, was roasting in the blaze; and they were waiting till it should be sufficiently done.

It was the elder who spoke first; at least upon a subject foreign to the preparation of their repast.

"Darn it, Ned!" said he, "I hev been dreemin' 'bout ye last night."

"Indeed! I hope nothing that promises bad luck. Bah! why should I think of luck, one way or the other? For me there can be none in the future worse than I've had in the past. What was your dream, 'Life?'"

"Oh! nuthin' much. I only thort I see'd ye alongside o' a gurl; an' she war a-pullin' at ye to git ye away from the mountings. She war tryin' to tote ye along wi' her."

"She didn't succeed, I suppose?"

"Wal! I woke up 'fore it kin to thet. But ef't hed been the gurl as I see'd in my dream, an' it war all true, I reck'n she'd 'a' hed a good chance."

"And pray what girl did you see in your dream?"

"Maybe you'd like me to pronounce the name; ef ye do, I'd say Char' Blacke Her. She war the very gurl as war a-draggin' at ye."

At the mention of the name "Ned" heaved a deep sigh, though the sizzling of the hump-ribs hindered his companion from hearing it. But, by the brighter light caused by the fat

falling among the cinders, a shadow could be seen suddenly overspreading his countenance; his features at the same time assuming a cast half sad, half angry.

"Not much danger of that dream coming true," he said, with an effort at composing them. "Clara Blackadder has no doubt long ago changed her name; and forgotten mine too."

"I don't think she's d'ed eyther one or the t'other. Warrmen are a kewwous kind o' varmint; an' cing onto their notions a deal harder'n we do. Besides, that gurl wa'n't one o' the changin' sort. I knowed her since she war knee-high to a duck. Sae war the only one o' the bul family o' Blackadders worth knowin'; for a badder cuss than the brother wa'n't nowhar to be foun' in Mississippi, 'ceptin' 'twar the one square hisself. That gurl loved you, Nel; an' if you'd took the right way wi' her, you mout yourself 'a' had the changin' o' her name."

"What way?"

"Whipped her off on the crupper o' yer saddle—just as these hyar prairie boys sometimes does. Ye shed 'a' d'ed fast an' said no more about it, eyther to her father or to anybody else. It's the way I d'ed myself wi' Sal Shocum, down here in Tennessee bottom, rich on thirty year ago. When I went down to the Cherokee Patches. Dick, her ole dad, wa' an' eg'in' me havin' his girl, 'cause he had a spite at me for beatin' him at a shootin'-match. 'Twant' no use his opposin' them. I got my cutter saddle up, one night when Dick wa' sound asleep in his shanty, an' I took Sal off, an' took her afore a Meade's preacher, who coupled us together in the skin' o' a goat's tail. An' I niver had reason to regret it. Sal made me a good wife, as long's she lived. I kin't find a better 'un since."

The young man smiled sally at the strange ideas of his trapper companion; but the subject being a painful one to him, he made no rejoinder.

"That's what you ought to d'ed wi' Char' Blackadder," persisted the trapper, without noticing his companion's change, "cut clear away wi' her. Ef ye'd 'a' hed her for yur wife, it 'ud 'a' been different for ye now. Insteed o' bein' hyar in the mountings, rapin' yer innards out—for I kin see ye're doin'

that, Ned—ye must now be settled in the State o' Mississippi, workin' a cotton plantashan wi' a smart chance o' riggers on't. Not as I myself sho'd care 'bout eyther; for after twenty yearn o' ramblin' over these hyar regions, I ain't fit to live in the settlement. It's different wi' you, however, who ain't no ways shocked for a trapper's life—though I'll say thar ain't a better shot or hunter in all these parishes. Anybody kin see ye're only hyer for a different purpos; tho' I reck'n 'Life Orton' air the only 'un to which ye've confided yur secret. Wal; you know I like ye, Ned; an' that's why I don't like to see ye so down in the dumps. They've been on you ever since you left Mississippi; an' I reck'n you'll find no cure for 'em out hyar."

"Admitted, 'Life, that I still think of Miss Blackaller. As I know you are my friend, I will admit it. But what would you have me do?"

"Go back to the Choctaw Parcliss, get once more 'long-side the girl, an' do wi' her as I did wi' Sal Slocum—run away wi' her."

"But she may be married? Or perhaps no longer cares for me?"

"This was said with a sigh.

"Neither one nor t'other. 'Life Orton air within' to bet high on that. First place, thar war reezons she wouldn't git married easy. The ole squire, her dad, wa'n't poplar 'bout the Parcliss; an' I don't think he war over rich. The young 'un must 'a' spent most of the shiners as come in for the cotton. I know you wouldn't 'a' cared 'bout that; but others wud; an' I guess Char' Blackaller wa'n't like to hev her chole in amang the sons o' the best planters; an' I guess too she wa'n't the girl to hev any o' the second-best. Then she liked you powerful. She told me so, time I war back ther, just arter you left. Yes, Ned; she liked you, an' take this odds 's wud for it, she'll stick to that 'hun' as death to a dead nigger."

Quaint and queer as was the trapper's talk, it was pleasant to the ear of Edward O'Neil; for such was the name of the young man—the same who had made suit for the hand of Clara Blackaller, and been scornfully rejected by her father.

Of his life since that time the story is easily supplied. Or

leaving the State of Mississippi he had gone westward into that of Arkansas; staying some time at Little Rock. He had afterward made his way to the Rocky Mountains, in the hope that among their deep defiles he might be enabled to bury the sorrow that was preying upon him. Chance had brought him in contact with 'Lije Orton, a noted trapper of the time, and something besides had made them trapping companions, as well as fast friends: for 'Lije, though of rude habit and exterior, was at the heart true as steel.

The young Irishman, smiling at the crude simile of his companion, made no reply. Indeed, there was no opportunity: for, while delivering it, 'Lije saw that the buffalo-ribs were sufficiently roasted; and, leaning forward over the fire, he transferred them from the spit to a large wooden platter, taken out of his "*possille sack*." Before any response could be given, he had separated the ribs with his knife; and, taking hold of one in both hands, he commenced stripping it with his teeth, as quickly and adroitly as could have been done by the hungriest coyote.

CHAPTER VII

BREAKFAST INTERRUPTED.

THE two trappers had got about half through their Homeric meal, when a sound reached their ears that caused them not only to stop mastication, but hold the half-polished ribs suspended, as if they would have dropped them out of their hands! It was a shot they heard—first one, and then several others following in quick succession. They were heard only indistinctly, as if fired far off upon the prairie. But even thus, the sounds were not agreed to; for the report of firearms in that solitary region has a significance, and not always a safe one. It might be a friend, who has discharged his gun; but it is more likely to be an enemy. Evidently so believed the two trappers, else they would not have fixed their camping-place in a spot so difficult of access—requiring them

to wade waist-deep in water, and twice too, every time they went a hundred yards from their tent! The spring-branch occupying the full bed of the cañon, the only way by which they could conveniently pass out to the plain, called for this extraordinary exertion. But the same gave them protection against all intruders.

"Speed up, Ned!" cried his companion, "an' see what you kin see."

The request was at once complied with; the younger trapper, leaning down his half-picked bone, commenced climbing the steep face of the rock, assisted by the branches of the cedars. 'Life remained below, continuing his matutinal meal.

In a few seconds' time O'Neil had reached the summit of the cliff; and with a small binocular glass, which he had taken up along with him, commenced examining the country in the direction whence the shots appeared to have come.

It was yet only the earliest dawn, and the plain toward the east was still shrouded in darkness. But as the young man kept gazing through the glass, a quick flash came before its lens, followed by the report of a gun. At the same instant, sparks flew up, as if from a fire that had been trampled upon, and on the still morning air he could hear the confused sounds of strife, in which human voices appeared to be intermingled with the yelling of demons!

"D'ye see any thing, boy?" called his comrade from below. "I heard another shot out yonderward. You must 'a' see'd the flash o't."

"More than that," responded the young man, speaking with hurried breath. "Come up, 'Life! There's a fight going on not far off. Some travelers have been encamped, as I can tell by the sparkling of their fires. They appear to have been attacked, and by Indians. Come up, quick!"

The old trapper, grumbling his chagrin at being interrupted in his dinner, dropped the buffalobone; and taking his rifle along with him, commenced ascending the cliff.

By the time he had joined his companion on the summit, the day had almost dawned; for the morning twilight is of short duration on the high-waters of the Southern Plate.

Looking eastward over the plain, they could now see some-

thing more than the gleaming of camp-fires; the white tilts of wagons set in *corrals* shape, and around them dark forms, both of men and horses, swarming and moving like bees living upon a branch. They could hear, too, the sounds of strife still continuing, or it might be the exulting shouts succeeding a triumph.

"A camp o' whites," said the old trapper, speaking half to himself, and half to his comrade. "That's clear from their havin' wagons. An' they've been attacked by Injuns; that's equally sartin from the shouts. That's no mistakin' them yells. They kedn't come from any other than a Injun's throat. I wonder who the whites kin be?"

His young comrade, equally wondering, but still busy with his binocular, made no rejoinder.

"A party o' emigratin' travelers, I reck'n," pursued the old trapper. "Can't a be any o' Bent's or St. Vrain's people. They w'udn't 'a' got surprised thet eezy, nor 'ud they 'a' gone under so quick. Sartin sure hev they gone under. Listen to them yells! That's the conquerin' screech o' Injuns, sartin as my name's 'Lije Orton!'"

His companion did not need any assurance, beyond what he himself heard and saw. There could be no doubt about its being a traveling party, either of emigrants or prairie traders, that had succumbed to an onslaught of savages.

Neither were they long doubtful as to the character of the travelers. The sun, now peeping up over the far prairie-edge, illumined the scene of strife, showing half a dozen wagons, with some of their canvas covers dragged off; and around them the dark forms of a savage cohort.

"It's a karnym o' emigrants, as I tuk it for," said the trapper. "Rather a small 'un at that! What d'arn d'arn they must 'a' been to venture across the prairies with such a little o' stren'th as they 'pear to hev! They're all 'most cut 'now, I reck'n; or them as lives ar capered, an' in the hands o' the Injuns."

"If them Injuns be, as I suspect they ar, Yellow Chief an' his band, the Lord pity them poor critters! They've all got rubbed out in the scrimmage, and that 'un 'a' been the end o't."

"Yellow Chief?" repeated the trapper's companion. "And

If it be he, the cruel ruffian, and he have captives, you are right, 'Life' is plying them. I heard some terrible tales of him last time I was over at Lewis's Fort. Whenever the Indians go, they are out in to have taken some captives. An' even at that—there should be women and children along with 'em! Surely the savages will not kid them! Can we do anything toward rescuing them? Can we not save them? Think, 'Life!'

"I am a-thinkin', an' hev been, ever since I kem up hyur. But 'tain't no use. We must think our heads off, 'thout devisin' any way to be o' use to them. We'd only git ourselves into the same trap as they're in—an' maybe wuss; for them Cheyennes—specially Yellow Chief's gang—hez late tuk a desperate anger ag'in' us trappers, because, as they say, some o' our hunters carried off one o' their squaws from the place where they war campin' last spring in the Middle Park. If it's the Cheyenne thoo as is squadin' out thar, the furrer we keep away from 'em the longer we'll hev ha'r on our heads. Huh! what's that thing comin' on yonder?"

The examination, as the query that followed, was called for, it sort of a dark object, that seemed to be moving over the prairie, and in the direction of the cliff—from the top of which the two trappers, themselves concealed behind a cedar tree, were scanning the outward plain. It had the appearance of a human being; but one so diminutive in size and of such dusky hue that it might have passed for a fresh-dropped half-breed, or one of the dark-brown wolves sometimes seen prowling the mountains. And it seemed to go with a crouching gait, and in the upright attitude of a man!

"He's a nigger!" cried the old trapper, as the moving object began to get near. "A nigger, an' a boy at that! Durn me if that's what I cain't! young dinky he be! Look how he waddles about through the bushes, crawlin' from scrub to scrub! Darn me if that boy ain't worth his weight in best buckskins! Now, I kin see how it air. He's been one o' the berry men, waddled by that, I reck'n, must be from the South; one o' them slaves, sartin; an' some bad master rubbed out, let's the boy kin on his own account. Wagh! he's comin' right this way! Now, you're soper than I'm; skoot out, an' try ef ye kin catch him, whiles I stay hyur, an' look out

for what's a-doin' yonder. Git your claws on the darky, ef ye kin, an' we may larn all about it."

O'Neil sprung down the cliff; and, wading through the cañon, was soon alongside the black-skinned fugitive—a negro boy, as anticipated.

There was no chase required for the catching him; the darky was already breathless and broken down, after his long run; and submitted to being taken prisoner without any attempt at running away—the more readily no doubt on seeing that his captor was white.

The young Irishman did not question him on the spot; but, at once conducting him into the cove, called to his comrade to come down.

"Wal, ye young imp o' darkness!" began the trapper, as soon as he had descended, "whar hev you come from, so skecart-like?"

"From de wagins, massa—de wagins, whar da wa' camp—"

"What wagons?"

"De wagins dat we're all a-trabelin' wif 'cross big praira. Dar war de white folk and de col'd people, all ob de plant-asa'n'; an' I 'speck dey all kill'd 'ceptin' maself."

"Who kilt them?"

"De Injuns, dem as war painted red, an' white, an' chery color—dey come gallop up on da hosses jess as our folks wa' 'boat to git breaktass; an' 'fore we know what we doin' dey fire dar gun, an' run dar long 'pears troo de people. Oh, massa! 's sure ebbery body gone kill'd."

"Wharfore de ye think thet?"

"Kase I see ole massa fall down an' blood 'treaming out o' him face, an' den I see ob-sseah fire shot from his gun, an' den de young massa she beller out, an' so did all de res ob de women an' chil'ren, boaf de blacks an' de whites. Gwa-mi'ty! how dey did 'cream!"

"What war the name o' y'ar ole massa, as ye call him? Kin ye tell us that?"

"Law, boss, sartin I kin tell dat. Ebbery body know de name ob ole massa. He call de Squiah Blackedder."

"Squire Blackedder?"

"Squire Blackedder?" asked O'Neil, listening with intense anxiety for the answer.

"Ya, massa; dat am de name."

"Whar did ye come from? Kin ye tell thet, darky?"

"From Massissipy 'tate—de ole plantashun ain't berry far from de town o' Vick'burg, on de big rilda."

This was about all the information the negro lad could give.

It was sufficient for the time. On obtaining it, the trapper threw up his hands, and gave utterance to a loud "Phew"; while his companion stood silent, as if suddenly struck dumb!

CHAPTER VIII

PLANNING A RESCUE.

"What's best to be d'd? What d'ye say, Ned?"

"Let us go straight to the place, and see what has happened. Oh, heavens! If Clara has been killed!"

"Go straight to the place! Yur as-heamin', young 'un! Suppose it be Yeller Chief an' his crowd o' cut-throats? We'd both o' us get scalped to a satinty."

"But we might approach under cover near enough—"

"Near enuf fer nothin'. Thar ain't no kiver in that quarter, as I kin see from hyur; an' to cut acrost the prairie, 'ud be to go straight sartint inter the teeth o' them squadin' skunks. They're bound to be drunk jost about this time; an' whether it's Yeller Chief's lot or no, we'd get sharp sars from 'em. Thet ye may sw'ar to."

"We must do something, Ned. I can not bear to think that she may be in the hands of those horrid savages, and I could not live if I were without sight of her! If she be living I must rescue her, and if dead, by heavens, I shall revenge her! We must do something, 'Lije! we must!"

"And what would we want to do something? Not this odd, sassy. Maybe I might 'a' said so, if that had been only ole Black-belt in the scrape an' his precious son along w' him, an' along w' both that so-called o' a overseer, Sam Snively. But the gurl—she's different; an' I feel as desprit

on doin' somethin' for her as you kin. F'r all that it's no use our doin' what air durned foolchness. We must set 'bout this thing wi' percasshan. Hyer, you darky! Kin you tell how many Injuns ther war in the party that attacked Lee?"

"Dar war a big lot, massa—gobs on 'em; I's sure more'n a hunder—far more'n dat."

"Bah!" exclaimed the trapper, disappointedly. "'Tain't no use inquiren' o' him. See hyar, nigger! Did you notice any o' them as 'peered to be thar leeder?"

"Wha—what, massa?"

"A leeder, durn ye! A chief?"

"A chief?"

"Yes, one that war actin' as boss, or overseer."

"Ah! de boss. Yes, thar war a bossy 'mong dem; I 'pose he muss 'a' been, kase he order all de oders 'bout."

"Kin ye describe what he war like? How war he dressed? What sort o' duds had he on him?"

"Easy 'nuf dat, massa. He drest mos like de res ob dem—only on de top ob him head dar wa' a big spread ob feather, shinin' like de tail o' a peacock."

"The Yellow Chief?" exclaimed the questioner.

"No, massa. He no yell. He wa' painted red. Dar wa' some yell stripe; bat mos' ob him wa' a bright red color—redder dan blood."

"Never mind that, nigger: you don't know what I'm talkin' 'bout. What did ye see him do?"

"See'd him try to 'top de shootin' an' killin'."

"Stop the shootin' an' killin'! You saw him tryin' to do thet? Air ye sure o't, boy?"

"No, massa, I can't shoot. I thort he wa' d' in'sol. I wa'n't ghoot. I wa' 'fraid dey 'ud go on wid de killin', an' dat's why I tole 'em to stop de shootin' an' run out o' dis way."

"F'r the Yellow Chief, old 'bout his head to stop the killin'. 'Tain't dis way." This remark was to O'Neil, who stood chatting at the deny.

"How strange," he answered. "In any case, it's no use our remainin' longer here, if we're going to do any thing. What can you think of, 'Lije?"

The trapper, with his right palm resting upon the trigger of his gun, stood for a while, reflecting.

"That's one thing," he said at length; "e't air this Cheyenne shaw, an' he kin't kin the hull lot o' them outright, that's jist a chance o' our savin' some o' 'em."

"Thank God!" exclaimed O'Neil, in a tone of relieved anxiety. "You think there's a chance, 'Lajé?"

"I duz."

"In what way?"

"Well; still concedin' the pint o' its bein' Yeller Chief, a kin guess jolly near what it means. He's out w' a band o' the young braves, that ain't likely to track strait back to the town o' their tribe so long's they've got captive women among 'em."

The young Irishman started at the words. They conveyed a thought that gave pain to him; but, anxious to hear his countryman's scheme for their rescue, he did not interrupt him.

"An' e't be them, I kin guess whar they'll go—most sure on 't. This chief chances to know one o' Yeller Chief's jays' campin'-ground's. I fand that when I war trappin' in this quarter two yearn ago—thar's you war down stayin' at Bent's. They're over yonder now, a-plan to kin' the poor emigrants an' their wagons, an' we had to strait to 'em ef we wanted to get out o' our traps. But as we don't want that, the question is, whar they'll be when we kin back in search o' 'em."

"Come back! You purpose going somewhere? Where to?"

"To St. Vrain's."

"Ah! For what purpose?"

"For the only purpose that kin serve *our* purpose: an' that air to get a bunch o' the young men as kin find us a kin' in this business. Without that, we'd hav as much chance to rescue the captives—as that be any such—as for a kin to catch a Kit fox."

"How you think we should find any there?"

"I kin see no way. The daily fox-tell us o' a party that passed the mountains on that way. No doubt they war bound for the fort. Besides I met several hunters last season when I war trappin' on the Colorado, as says they war caught, an' intended to stop at St. Vrain's on that way. I shan't be surprised ef we kin find 'em on 'em the now. Half

o' the number will be enuf to chestize Yellur Chief an' his gang o' freebooters. Thunfor' let's go to the fort right away, an' see what kin be done."

"I'm with you, 'Lije! We must lose no time! Think of the danger she may be in; that is, if not past all danger already—Oh! I fear to reflect on it!"

"Ye're right, 'bout not losin' time," said the trapper, without noticing the last exclamatory remark. "Same time," he added, "'twon't do fur us to make too much haste, else we most find it the wuss speed, as the spellin'-book used ter say. We must keep clost in to the bottom o' the bluffs in torst St. Vrain's; else them Injuns may spy us. Ef they shood, we'll be in for a ugly scrape; an' not like to git clear o't 'thout sheddin' the skins o' our two skulls. Wagh! that 'ere w'd'n't be no way agreeable; an' ef't wa'n't that thar's a gurl in the questi'n, whose life, an' somethin' else, oughter be saved, I'd 'a' stayed hyur to finish my breakfast, an' let Yellur Chief an' his cut-throats go straight en-trut to—darnation! But come, Ned! we're a-wastin' time an' I know you don't weesh that. Hyur now, nigger! you help wi' the saddlin' o' these losses. Ef you've been brought up 'bout Squire Blackadder's stables I reck'n you know somethin' 'bout hesses. An' harkce, boy! we two air goin' away a bit. So you keep clost in this hyur hole, till we kum back ag'in. You kin rest your black kar-kidge inside that thar tent, whar ye'll find somethin' in the way o' battler-meat to keep y'ur ivories from chatterin'. Don't eet it all, o'ye heer. We may come back sharp-set; an' ef thar's nothin' left, may take into our heels to eet you."

While this talk was going on, two horses were led forth from a cave in the cliff that served them for stable.

Both being quickly accoutered, the trappers sprung into their respective saddles; and spurring toward the cañon, were soon peering between its shadowy walls, on their way to the outward plain.

Sixty seconds spent in walking, and they emerged dripping into the light of day. More of it than they wished for: since the sun was now fairly up, his disk appearing some two or three degrees above the prairie horizon.

There was need for the horsemen to show circumspection. And they did: silently skirting the cañ, and keeping behind

huge boulders, that, for long ages shed from its summit, strewed the plain at its base.

"After all, Ned," said the old trapper, when they had ridden to a safe distance from the dreaded spot, "we needn't be so particular. I reck'n, 'bout this time, there ain't a sober Indian on the banks o' Bijou. I hope ole Blackadder an' his party, after havin' the settlements, had in a good supply of right—enough to keep them skunks well-burned till we get back again. If that be the case, there'll be some chance o' our 'chestizin' 'em."

A nasal "hmm" was the only response made by the young Irishman; who was too much occupied in thinking of Clara Blackadder's danger, to reflect coolly on the means of rescuing her—even though it were certain she still lived.

CHAPTER IX.

ST. VRAIN'S.

ONE of the classical names associated with the "commerce of the prairies" is that of St. Vrain. Ever since trapping became a trade, or at all events, since prairie land, with its wilds, had grown to be a frequent, as well as interesting topic of conversation around the hearth-fires of the American people, the names of Bent, St. Vrain, Bonneville, Robinson, Larimer, and Pierre Chateau, might often be heard upon the lips of men.

And more frequently than St. Vrain; by whose daring and enterprise not only were caravans carried across the almost unbroken wilderness to the Mexican settlements of Santa Fe, but whose establishment in the very midst of this wilderness, and his personal participation, with a military efficiency, in the defence of many a little European depot!

Yet there was no expedition here, supported by the sweat of a taxed people; only a simple defensive organization for the purpose of a valuable, as a profitable industry.

And when the iron-horse goes snorting through the midst

of those distant solitudes, and cities have sprung up on his track, the spots so marked in our history will become classic ground; and many a tale will be told of them, replete of the richest romance.

Were I to live in the not very remote future, I would rather have within my ornamental grounds the ruin of one of Bent's or St. Vrain's Forts, than the crumbling walls of Kenilworth Castle or the Keep of Carisbrooke. More picturesque, more romantic, more exciting, would be the souvenirs recalled, and the memories awakened by them.

St. Vrain's trading-post, on the South Fork of the Platte, was one of those long noted as a favorite rendezvous of the free trappers; as might have been told by any one choosing to make stop at it, in the season when these wandering adventurers laid aside their traps to indulge in a spell of idleness and a "spree."

Just such a time was that when Squire Blackelder and his emigrant companions were approaching the post, and fell into the clutches of the Cheyennes. It was not one of their grandest gatherings: since only about twenty of them were there; but among twenty trappers, or even less, there is no lack of company. And if all, or even part of them, have returned with fat packs, and found beaver selling at three dollars the "paw," there will be a merry company; and times becoming dangerous—not only to strangers, but to one another—through too much drink.

An assemblage of this sort—including, we are sorry to say, both the sober and the drunk—were at St. Vrain's Fort on the day above specified. They had come there from all quarters; from the parks and "holes" of the Rocky Mountains, from the streams, creeks, and branches on this side running east, as well as from the head-waters of the Green, Bear, and Colorado coursing west. Nearly all of them had made a good season of it, and arrived with their pack animals sagging under the spoils of the trap and the race.

These had become the property of the fort, after an exchange on its side of guns, knives, powder, and lead, with five-point Mackinaw blankets, and other articles of trapper wear; including those of adornment, and not forgetting some sparkling *bijouterie* intended as gifts, or "gages d'amour" for the

bronze-skinned beauties of the prairie. Rude as is the trapper's life, and solitary too, he is not insensible either to the charms of love, or its companionship.

In addition to the articles thus swapped or "trucked," the trappers assembled at St. Vrain's to exchange for their peltries, had also received a large quantity of coin currency, in the shape of Mexican silver dollars. With these burning the bottoms out of their pockets, it is scarce necessary to say that drink was the order of the day, with cards as its accompaniment.

We regret having to make this statement; as also, that quarrels are the too frequent termination of these games of euchre and "poker."

Another source of strife among the trappers assembled at St. Vrain's, was to be found in the fact: that a friendly Indian tribe, the "Crows," were encamped near the post; and among these birds, notwithstanding the name, are many that are beautiful.

No soft courtship suits an Indian belle. If you want to win her, you must show bravery; and you will not risk losing her affections if your bravery degenerate into brutalism!

Such are the moral inclinations of both men and women in the state called "savage"; but it must not be supposed that this is the state of Nature. On the contrary, the *savages*, properly so styled, have long since passed from their pristine condition of simplicity.

Several quarrels had occurred among the trappers at St. Vrain's Fort—more than one had ended in the shedding of blood.—The last of the bloodiest was on the eve of breaking out, when a cry from the sentinel on the azotea caused a suspension of the broil.

The quarrelers were below, on the level plain that stretched away from the grand gate entrance of the building, and around a sort of general ground for assemblage—as well for all athletic sports, as for games of a less recommendable kind.

The shout of the sentry caused them to look toward the plain, where they saw two horsemen going at a gallop, and evidently making for the fort.

The curiosity with which they approached, and the way

they were urging on their steeds, told a tale of haste. It could be no caper of two men trying the speed of their horses. The animals seemed too badly blown for that.

"Thar's Injuns after them two fellers!" said Black Harris, a celebrated mountain man. "Or hez a-been not far back. Boys! can any o' ye tell who they are? My sight ain't so plain as 'twar twenty year ago."

"If I ain't mistook," answered another of the trapper fraternity, "that 'un on the clay-bank hoss is ole 'Lije Orton, oreeginally from Tennessee. Who the other be, durn me ef I know. A young un', I guess; an' don't look at all like these hyar purairies, though he do sit that black hoss, as though he war friz to him. Don't the feller ride spanky?"

"*Ay dios!*" exclaimed a man whose swarth skin and be-spangled costume proclaimed him a Mexican. "Call that riding, do you? *Carrai!* on our side of the mountains a child of six years old would show you better!"

"In trath an' yez are mistaken, Misther Saynyor Sanchez as ye call yerself. I know who that gosoon is that's coming up yonder, for he's a countryman av mine; and, be the powers! he kin roide to bate any Mixikan in the mountains—not like a cat stickin' on the back av a goat as yez do it; but like a gentleman. Him yonder, beside ould 'Lije Orton, is Misther Edward Ortle, ov the Onales av County Tipperary; an' be jabers, he is a gentleman be both sides av the house!"

Before this new discussion could culminate in another quarrel, the two horsemen had ridden upon the ground, and pulled up in the midst of the trappers, who, with eager, inquiring looks, gathered in a circle around them.

CHAPTER X.

CHANGED HOSTILITIES.

THE freshly-arrived horsemen, instead of alighting remained seated in their saddles.

For a time neither spoke; though their silence might be, for want of breath. Both were panting, as were also the horses that bore them.

"There's somethin' wrong, 'Lije Orton," said Black Harris, after saluting an old comrade. "I can tell that by y'ur looks, as well's by the perspiration on y'ur animal. 'Tain't often as you put the critter in such a sweat. What is it, ole boss? Yellow belly, or Injun? It can't be white."

"What's got somethin' to do wi' it," replied the old trapper, having somewhat recovered his wind. "But Injun more."

"That's a riddle, boys! Which o' ye kin read it? 'Splain y'urself, 'Lije."

"There ain't much explinashin needed; only that a party o' emigrants hez been attacked on Bijou Creek; an' maybe all on 'em killed, far as this chile kin tell."

"What emigrants? Who attacked them?"

"Y'ur first question, boys, I kin answer clear enuf. They were some planters from the State o' Mass-issip'."

"That's my State!" interpolated one of the trappers—a young fellow—inclined to take part in the talking.

"Set up y'ur head!" commanded Harris, turning upon the fellow one of his blackest frowns.

"Whether it be y'ur State or no," continue the imperturbable 'Lije, "don't make much difference. What I've got to say, boys, is this: A kumv'n o' emigrant planters, bound for California, wi' their niggers along, camp'd last night on the bank o' Bijou Creek. After sun-up this mornin', they war surrounded by Injuns; an' I reck'n most, if not all on 'em hev been killed. I claim to know who them emigrants war; but that's no bizness o' y'arn. I reck'n it's enuf that they war whites, an' that Injuns hez had the deed."

"What Indians? Do you know what tribe?"

"That oughtn't to make any difference cyther," responded 'Life. "Though I reck'n it will, when I've told ye who the attackin party war, an' who led 'em. I've alser got on the trail o' that."

"Who? 'Rapahoes?"

"No."

"'Tain't the direction for Blackfeet."

"Nor Blackfeet neyther."

"Cheyennes, then? I'll stake a bale o' beaver it's them same Injuns, in my opeenyan, the most trechermost as scours these hyar perairies."

"Ye wouldn't lose y'er skins," quietly responded 'Life. "It air Cheyennes es hez done it."

"And who do you say chiefed 'em?"

"There's no need asking that," said one, "now we know it's Cheyennes. Who should it be but that young devil they call Yellow Chief? He's rubbed out more o' us white trappers than the oldest brave among 'em."

"Is it he, 'Life?" asked several in a breath. "Is it the Yellow Chief?"

"'Tain't nobody else," quietly declared the trapper.

The declaration was received by a perfect tornado of cries in which curses were mingled with threats of vengeance. All of them had heard of this Indian chieftain, whose name had become a terror to trapperdom—at least that section of it lying around the head-waters of the Platte and Arkansas. It was not the first time many of them had sworn vengeance against him, if he should ever fall into their power; and the occasion appeared to have arrived, for at least a chance of obtaining it. The air and attitude of 'Life Orton led them to believe this.

All at once their mutual quarrels were forgiven, if not forgotten; and, with friendships fresh cemented by hostility to the common foe, they gathered around the old trapper and his companion—first earnestly listening to what these two had still to tell, and then as earnestly giving ear to the trapper's counsel about the course to be pursued.

There was no question of their remaining inactive. The name of the Yellow Chief had fired one and all, from Lead

to foot, rousing within them the bitterest spirit of vengeance. To a man they were ready for an expedition, that should end either in flight or pursuit. They only hesitated to consider how they had best set about it.

"Do you think they might be still around the wagons?" asked one, addressing himself to Orton.

"Not likely," answered 'Life; "an' for reezuns. Fust an' reenzons', thar war some o' you fellers, as passed the karry in yesterday, 'bout the hour o' noon. Ain't that so?"

"Yes; we did," responded one of three trappers, who, standing silently in the circle, had not yet taken part in the heated conversation. "We traveled along with them for some distance," continued the man, "and stayed a bit at their boun' habbing-place. We didn't know any of the party, except their guide, who was that Choctaw that used to hang about Bent's Fort. Wab-gi, the Indlyens call him. Well; we warned them against the feller, knowing him to be a queer 'un. Like enough it's him that has betrayed them."

"That's been the trector," said 'Life. "Him an' no other; tho' it mosn't 'a' made much difference. They war boun' to go under anyhow, wi' Yeller Chief lookin' arter 'em. An' now, as to the lookin' arter him, we won't find him at the wagons. Knowin' you've him on hyar, an' knowin', as he's sartin ter do, that thar's a good grist o' trappers at the fort, he'll stay 'bout the plundered camp no longer than'll take him an' his party to settle up spoin' the plunder. Then they'll stress it. They've goed away from thar long afore this."

"We can track them."

"No ye can't. Leastwise, ef ye did, it wos'dn't be a bit of use. This chile hev thort o' a shorter a better way o' findin' out thar wharabouts."

"You know where they are gone, 'Life?" interrogated Black Harris.

"Perry nigh the spot, Harry. I reck'n I kin find it out, 'ithout much gropin'."

"Good for you, de nuss! You guide us to thar swarmin'-place; an' ef we don't break up thar wasp's nest an' strangle thar yeller hornet o' a chief, then call Black Harris o' the mountains a d-d-r-ted greenhorn!"

"Ef I don't guide ye strait custrut into thar campin'-place

ye may call ole 'Life Orton blinder than the owls o' a puraria-dog town. So git your things ready, boys: an' kum right arter me!"

It was an invitation that needed no pressing. The hope of being revenged on the hated sub-chief of the Cheyennes—for deeds done either to themselves, their friends, or the comrades of their calling—beat high in every heart; and, in less than ten minutes' time, every trapper staying at St. Vrain's Fort, with a half-score other lingers-on of the establishment, was armed to the teeth, and on horseback!

In less than five minutes more, they were hastening across the prairie with 'Life Orton at their head, in search of the Yellow Chief.

There were only five-and-twenty of them in all; but not one of their number who did not consider himself a match for at least three Indians!

As for Black Harris and several others of like kidney, they would not have hesitated a moment about encountering six each. More than once had these men engaged in such unequal encounters, coming out of them victorious and triumphant.

Twenty-five against fifty, or even a hundred, what signified it to them? It was but sport to these reckless men! They only wanted to be brought face to face with the enemy; and then let their long rifles tell the tale.

It was a tale to be told, before the going down of the sun.

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTORS AND CAPTIVES.

ONCE more in the gorge, where the young Cheyenne chief, and his band had encamped, before making attack upon the emigrant caravan.

It is the day succeeding that event, an hour before mid-day, with a bright sun shining down from a cloudless sky. The stage is the same, but somewhat changed the characters

who figure upon it, having received an addition of more than double the number. The Indians are there; but even they do not seem the same. From the quiet, earnest attitude of an expectant band, they have been transformed into a crowd of shouting savages.

Foxes before the quarry was run down, they are now ravening wolves.

Some are carousing, some laying down on the grass in a state of helpless inactivity; while others, restrained by the authority of their chief, have kept sober, and stand guard over their new-made captives.

Only a few are needed for this duty. Three sentinels are deemed sufficient--one to each group: for the prisoners have been separated into three distinct parties--holding places apart from one another. The negroes, men, women and children, driven into a compact ring, occupy an angular space between two projections of the cliff. There, huddled together, they have no thought of attempting to escape.

To them their new condition of captivity is not so very different from that to which they have been all their lives accustomed; and beyond some apprehension of danger, they have not much to make them specially discontented. The Indian who stands beside them, with the butt of his long spear resting upon the turf, seems to know that his guard duty is a sinecure.

So also the sentinel who keeps watch over the white women--five in all--with about three times as many children--boys and girls of various degrees of age.

There is one among them, to whom none of these last can belong. She is old enough to be a wife: but the light, airy form and virginial grace proclaim her still inexperienced in marriage, as in the cases of maternity. It is Clara Blackadder.

Sadder than all the others, though unhappier than in most respects, she seems sad as any.

If she has no eyes to meet the children around her, she has grief enough of other years--for a father, when but a few hours before she had seen lying dead upon the prairie turf, and whose gray hairs, bespangled with blood, are still before her eyes.

It is his scalp that hangs from the point of a spear, stuck upright in the ground, not ten paces from where she sits!

There is yet another group equally easy to guard: for the individuals composing it are all securely tied, hand, neck, and foot.

There are six of them, and all white men. There had been nine in the emigrant party. Three are not among the prisoners; but besides the white scalp accounted for, two others, similarly placed on spears, tell the tale of the missing ones. They have shared the fate of the leader of the caravan, having been killed in the attack upon it.

Among the six who survive are Snively the overseer, and Blount Blackadder, the former showing a gash across his cheek, evidently made by a spear-blade. At best it was but an ill-favored face, but this gives to it an expression truly horrible.

A top belonging to one of the wagons had been brought away—the wagons themselves having been set on fire, out of sheer wanton wickedness; such cumbersome things being of no value to the light cavalry of the Cheyennes.

The single tilt appears in the camping place, set up as a tent; and inside it the chief, somnolent after a sleepless night, and wearied with the work of the morning, is reclining in *siesta*.

Waboga, with the body-servant, keeps sentry outside of it. Not that they fear danger, or even intrusion; but both know there is a spectacle intended—some ceremony at which they will be wanted, and at any moment of time.

Neither can tell what it is to be—whether tragic or comic; though both surmise it is not likely to be the latter.

The white men are not so fast bound, as to hinder them from conversing. In a low tone, telling of fear, they discuss among themselves the probability of what is to be done with them.

That they will have to suffer punishment, is not the question; only what it is to be, and whether it is to be death. It may be even worse: death preceded by torture. But death of itself is sufficient to terrify them; and beyond this their conjectures do not extend.

“I don’t think they’ll kill us,” said Snively. “As for

myself, they ought to be satisfied with what they've done already. They could only have wanted the plunder—they've got all that, and what good can our lives be to them?"

"Our lives, not much," rejoins a disconsolate planter. "You forget our scalps! The Indians value them more than any thing else—especially the young braves, as these appear to be."

"There's reason in that, I know," answers the overseer. "But I've heard that scalps don't count, if taken from the heads of prisoners; and they've made us that."

"It won't make much difference to such as them," pursues the apprehensive planter. "Look at them! Three-fourths of them drunk, and likely at any minute to take the notion into their heads to scalp us, if only for a frolic! I feel frightened every time they turn their eyes this way."

Of the six men there are four more frightened, when the carousing savages turn their eyes in another direction—toward the group of white women. One of these is a widow, made so that same morning, her husband at the time lying scalped upon the prairie—his scalp of invariant black curls hanging before her face upon the bloody blade of a lance!

Three others have husbands among the men—the fourth a brother!

The men regarding them, and thinking of what may be their fate, relapse into silence, as if having suddenly lost speech. It is the speechlessness of despair.

CHAPTER XII.

A NOVEL MODE OF PUNISHMENT.

THE sun was already past the meridian when the young Cheyenne chief, coming out from under the wagon tilt, once more showed himself to his captives. Since last seen by them there was a change in his costume. It was no more the short breech-cloth worn in war; but a gaily dress, such as is used by savages on the occasion of their grand ceremo-

ries. His coat was the usual tunic-like shirt of the hunter, with fringed cape and skirt; but instead of brown buckskin, it was made of scarlet cloth, and elaborately adorned by bead embroidery. Underneath were fringed leggings, ending in moccasins, worked with the porcupine-quill. A Mexican scarf of crimson China crape was around his waist, with its tasseled ends hanging behind. On his head was a checkered Madras kerchief, tied turban-fashion, its corners knotted on one side; while above the other rose a "parache" of bluish plumes, taken from the wings of the "gruya," or New Mexican crane, their tips dyed scarlet.

Stuck behind his sash was a glittering bowie-knife, that might once have been the property of a Kansas regulator; and there were also pistols upon his person, concealed under the white wolf-skin robe that still hung toga-like from his shoulders. But for the emblematical painting on his face, freshly touched up, he might have appeared handsome. With this he was still picturesque, though terrible to look upon. His size—he was full six feet—gave him a commanding appearance; and his movements easy, and without agitation, told of a commanding mind. His followers seemed to acknowledge it; as, on the moment of his emerging from the tent, even the most roysterois of them became quiet over their cups!

For some minutes he remained by the open end of the tent, without speaking to any one, or even showing sign that he saw any one around him. He seemed occupied with some mental plan, or problem; the solution of which he had stepped forth to seek.

It was some way connected with the tiny waterfall, that fell like a spout from the cliff; for his eyes were upon it.

After gazing at it for some time, they turned suddenly up to the sun; and as if seeing in it something to stimulate him, his attitude became changed. All at once he appeared to arouse himself from a lethargy, like one who has discovered the necessity of speedily entering upon action.

"Waboga!" he called, addressing himself to the Choctaw.

The traitor was not one of the intoxicated, and soon stood before him.

"Take some of the young men. Cut down a tree—one

of the piñon yonder. Lop off the branches, and bring it here."

Waboga went about the work without saying a word; and a couple of tomahawks were soon hacking at the tree.

It was but a slender one, of soft pine wood, and shortly fell. Then, lopped and topped, its trunk was dragged up to the spot where the chief stood, and where he had remained standing ever since issuing the order.

"It will do," he said, looking at the felled piñon, as if satisfied of its being suitable for his purpose. "Now take it to the fall there, and set it up—behind the jet of the water, so that it just clears it. Sink a deep hole, and see you stake it firmly."

The hole was sunk; the tree set upright in it; and then firmly wedged around with stones. The tiny stream, coming down from the cliff, fell vertically in front, according to the directions given, just clearing its top.

By further instructions from the chief, a stout piece of timber, taken from one of the limbs, was lashed transversely to it, forming a cross, about five feet above the ground.

During all these preparations no one knew for what they were intended. Even the Indians employed could not tell, and Waboga was himself ignorant.

The captives were equally at a loss to make out what was meant; though they surmised it to be the preliminary to some mode of punishment intended for themselves.

When they saw the erection taking the form of a crucifix, this of itself was suggestive of torture; but observing also the strange spot in which it was being set up, there began to glimmer on their minds a shadowy thought of its kind. Silently and one or two others—Blount, Blackadder among them—in the upright post and its cross-piece, with the water-jet falling in front, were reminded of a mode of punishment they had themselves too often inflicted.

"I wonder what they can be after wantin' with that?" said one of the prisoners to his fellow-captives.

None of them made reply. The same thought was in the minds of all, and it was terrifying them beyond the power of speech.

The interrogatory was answered in a different way. About

a dozen of the Indians, who had been called up around the chief, appeared to receive some directions from him. They were given in the Cheyenne tongue, and the captives could not make out what was said; though they could tell by the attitude and gestures of the chief Indians it related to themselves.

They were not long before discovering its object. Five or six of the young braves, after listening to the commands of their leader, turned their backs upon him, and came bounding on to the spot where the prisoners lay. They appeared in high glee, as if some sport was expected; while the hostile glance from their fierce eyes proclaimed it to be of a malignant kind—some ceremony of torture. And so was it.

It could scarce have been by accident that Blount Black-adler was the first victim selected. He was behind the others, and half crouching in concealment, when he was seized by two of the painted savages; who, jerking him suddenly to his feet, undid the fastenings around his ankles.

It was not to set him free: only to save them the trouble of carrying him to the spot where he was to afford them a spectacle. And it was of the kind at which he had himself often assisted—though only as a spectator.

His fellow-prisoners had no longer a doubt as to the torture intended for him, and in store for themselves. If they had, it was soon settled by their seeing him conducted forward to the spot where fell the tiny cataraet, and forced under it—with his back toward the tree-trunk.

In a few seconds his ankles were bound around its base. Then his arms, set free, were pulled out to their full stretch, and fast lashed to the transverse bar, so that his attitude resembled that of one suffering crucifixion!

Something still remained to be done. A rawhide rope was passed around his throat and the tree-trunk behind, to which it was firmly attached. His head was still untouched by the water-jet, that fell down directly in front of his face.

But he was not to remain thus. As soon as his position seemed satisfactory to the Indian chief, who stood examining it with a critical eye, and, so far as could be judged through the paint, with a pleased expression upon his face, he called some words of direction to a young warrior who was near

It was obeyed by the Indian, who, picking up an oblong block of stone, stood holding it above the head of him who was bound to the cross.

"So, Blount Blackadder!" cried the Cheyenne chief, no longer speaking in the Indian tongue, but in plain, understandable English. "It's your turn now. *Give him a double dose!*"

As he spoke, the Indian, who held the stone, sogged it down between the back of Blackadder's neck and the trunk of the tree. Wedged there, it brought his head into such a position that the stream of water fell vertically upon his crown!

The words pronounced by the Cheyenne chief produced a startling effect. Not so much upon him who was transfixed under the jet; though he heard them through the plashing water that fell sheeted over his ears.

For he well knew the purpose for which he had been so disposed, as well as the pain to be endured; and he was already in a state of mind past the possibility of being further terrified.

It was not he, but others, who heard them with increased fear; others who knew them to be words of dread import.

Snively started as they fell upon his ear; and so, too, Clara Blackadder. She looked up with a strange, puzzled expression upon her countenance.

Give him a double dose!

What could it mean? Snively had heard the order before—remembered a day on which he was commanded to execute it.

And the words, too, came from the mouth of an Indian chief—a painted savage—more than a thousand miles from the scene that recalled them! Even among the blacks, had they seen the policy of punishment, there were faces that expressed surprise, some the ugly pallor of fear, as if from a stricken conscience.

"*Give him a double dose! G-Harry!*" exclaimed one. "What does he say? Dat's joss whif Massa Blount say two year ago, when dey wa' gwine to pump on de head o' Blue Dick?"

More than one of the negroes remembered the cruel com-

mand, and some also recalled how cruelly they had sneered at him on whom the punishment was inflicted. A speech so strangely recurring could not help giving them a presentiment that something was right at hand to make them repent of their heartlessness.

They, too, as well as Snively, looked toward the chief for an explanation, and anxiously listened for what he might next say.

For a time there was no other word to make the matter clearer! With his wolf-skin robe hanging from his shoulders, the chief stood contemplating the punishment he had decreed to his captive; a smile of exultation overspreading his face, as he thought of the pain his white victim was enduring.

It ended in a loud laugh, as he ordered the sufferer to be unloosed from his lashings, and dragged clear of the cross.

And the laugh broke forth again, as Blount Blackadder, half drowned, half dead from the aching pain in his skull, lay prostrate on the grass at his feet.

Then came from his lips an additional speech, the young planter might not have heard, but that smote upon the ears of the overseer with a meaning strangely intelligible.

"It'll do for the present. Next time he offends in like manner, he shall be pumped upon till his thick skull splits like a cedar rail!"

CHAPTER XIII.

MAKING A BOLT.

At the new and still strange speech, Snively started again, and Clara Blackadder looked up with a still more puzzled expression; while among the blacks there ran a murmur of interrogatories and exclamations of terror.

It was on the overseer, however, that the words produced the strongest impression. He was a man of too much intellect—or that 'cuteness that passes for it—to be any longer in doubt as to the situation in which he and his fellow-captives were placed. A clear memory, coupled with an accusing

conscience, helped him to an explanation, at the same time telling him of a danger far worse than being captives in the hands of hostile Indians. It was the danger of death, with torture for its predicate. Both now appeared before his imagination, in their most horrid shape—an apprehension of moral pain added to the physical.

He glanced at his fastenings; examined them, to see if there was any chance of setting himself free. It was not the first time for him to make the examination; but never more earnestly than now.

The rawhide thong, wetted with the sweat of his body—in places with his blood—showed signs of stretching. By a desperate wrench he might get his limbs clear of it!

What if he should succeed in untying himself?

His liberty could only last for a moment—to be followed by a renewal of his captivity, or by a sudden death.

Neither could be worse than the fate that now seemed to be awaiting him, and fear! Even death would be preferable to the agony of apprehension he was enduring!

Once more glanced at his fastenings, and along with it the determination to set himself free from them.

And, without reflecting farther, he commenced a struggle, in which all his strength and cunning were concentrated.

The rawhide ropes yielded to the superhuman effort; and, clearing himself of their coils, he sprung out from among his fellow-prisoners; and went off at full speed toward the prairie!

He did not continue far in the direction of the outward plain. With no other hope of getting clear, than that held out by mere swiftness of foot, he would not have made the attempt. With the Indians' horses standing near, ready to be mounted at a moment's notice, the idea would have been simply absurd. Even before he had made ten half-score strides, several of the savages were seen rushing toward their steeds to take up the pursuit, for the prairie Indians never think of following a foe upon foot.

Had Saively kept on for the open plain, the chase would have been a short one. He had determined on a different course. While lying on the ground, and speculating on the chances of getting away, he had noticed a ravine that ran

sloping up toward the summit of the cliff. Trees grew thickly in it. They were dwarf cedars, bushy and umbrageous. If he could only get among them, screened by their foliage, he might succeed in baffling his pursuers. At all events, their arrows and bullets would be aimed with less likelihood of hitting him.

Once on the mountain slope above, which was also forest-clad, he would have at least a chance for his life.

He was a man of great strength, swift too of foot, and he knew it. It was his knowledge of the possession of these powers that gave him hope, and determined him on the attempt he had made.

It was not so unfeasible, and might have succeeded, had his only pursuers been they who had taken to their horses.

But there was one who followed him on foot, of equal strength, and swifter of foot than he. This was the Cheyenne chief. The latter had noticed the prisoner as he gave the last wrench to the ropes, and saw that he had succeeded in setting himself free from their coils. At the same instant that Snively sprung out from among his fellow-prisoners, the chief was upon the bound after him, with his long spear poised and ready for a thrust. He had thrown off his wolf-skin cloak to obtain freedom of movement for his arms.

Snively, as he had intended, turned abruptly to one side, and strack up the ravine, with the chief close following him. Those who had taken to their horses were for the time thrown out of the chase.

In a few seconds, both fugitive and pursuer had entered the gorge, and were lost to view under the spreading fronts of the cedars.

For a time those remaining below could not see them; but by the crackling of the parted branches, and the rattle of stones displaced by their feet, it could be told that both were still struggling up the steep.

Then came loud words, proclaiming that the pursuer had overtaken the pursued.

"A step farther, you accursed nigger-driver! one step farther, and I'll run my lance-blade right up through your belly! Down again! or I'll split you from hip to shoulder."

Although they saw it not from below, a strange, tragical

tal' on was presented at the moment when these words were spoken.

It was the chief who had uttered the threat. He was standing upon a ledge with his spear pointed vertically upward. Above him, hanging from a still higher ledge, with one hand grasping the edge of the rock, was the long, lathy form of the Mississippian overseer, outlined in all its ungainly proportions against the face of the cliff!

He had been endeavoring to climb higher; but not succeeding, was now overtaken, and at the mercy of his savage pursuer.

"Down!" repeated the latter, in a voice that thundered along the cliffs. "Why do you want to run away? You see I don't intend to kill you? If I did, how easily I might do it now. Down I say!"

For a moment Shively seemed to hesitate. A desperate effort might still carry him beyond the reach of the threatening spear. Could he be quick enough?

No. The eye of his enemy was too watchful. He felt, that on trying to make another attempt, he would have the iron handle, already red with his own blood, thrust through his body.

Another thought came into his mind. Should he drop down, grapple with the savage, and endeavor to wrest the weapon from his hands? He now knew whose hands held it.

It was a design entertained but for a moment. Ere he could determine upon its execution, half a dozen of the Indians, who had close followed their chief, came rushing up the rock, and stood upon the ledge beside him.

Instantly his long legs, with their slight foothold against the rock, Shively's grasp became detached from the rock; and he fell back into their midst; where he was at once seized, and tied more securely than ever.

"Down you down!" commanded the Cheyenne chief, speaking to his followers. And then addressing himself to the overseer, he continued: "When we get below, Mr. Shively, I'll explain to you why you're not already a dead man. I don't wish that; I want to have you alive for awhile. I've a show for you, as well as the others—especially those

belonging to old Blackadder's plantation ; but above all for yourself, its worthy overseer. Bring him below !"

The recaptured captive, dragged back down the ravine, though with fearful apprehensions as to what was in store for him, had no longer any doubt as to the identity of him with whom he had to deal.

When the Cheyenne chief strode up to the waterfall ; washed the paint from his face ; and then, turning toward the other captives, showed them the bright yellow skin of a mulatto, he was not taken by surprise.

But there was profound astonishment on the countenances of the negro captives ; who, on recognizing the freshly-washed face, cried out as with one voice :

" Blue Dick !"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RESCUERS.

WHILE the savage scenes described were being enacted in the mountain valley, a band of horsemen was fast approaching it, making their way around the skirting spurs that at intervals protruded into the prairie.

It is scarce necessary to say that these were the trappers from St. Vrain's, nor to add that they were riding at top-speed—fast as the horses and mules on which they were mounted could carry them.

Conspicuous in the front were two who appeared to act in the double capacity of leaders and guides. One of them seemed exceedingly anxious to press forward—more than any of the party. He was acting as if some strong urgency was upon him. It was the young Irishman, O'Neil. The man riding by his side, also seemingly trotted about time, was his old comrade, 'Lafe Oron, the trapper.

The two kept habitually ahead, now in muttered converse with one another, and now shouting back to their companions, to urge them onward. Some of these came close up, while some, at times, showed a disposition to straggle.

The truth is, the "mountain men" had brought their whisky-flasks along with them, and, at every stream crossed, they insisted on stopping to "take a horn."

O'Neil was impatient, and fretted at the delay. To him it was excruciating torture.

"After all," said Orion, with the intention less to restrain than comfort him, "it won't make so much difference, Ned. A wheel o' minutes ain't neyther hyur nor thur, in a matter o' the kind. In course, I know well o' what ye're thinkin' about."

He paused, as if expecting a rejoinder.

O'Neil only answered with a deep, long-drawn sigh.

"Ef any thing air to happen to the gurl," continued 'Lije, rather in the strain of a Job's comforter, "it will hev happened long 'fore this."

The young Irishman interrupted him with a groan.

"Maybe, Lows and ever," continued 'Lije, "she air all right yet. It air possible enuf the Injuns 'll get drunk, as soon as they lay their claws on the liquor that must 'a' been in the waggon; an' ef that be the case, they won't think o' troublin' any o' their lepraves till their carousin' kums to a end. This cinder's op'nyon is, ef they intend any torturin', they'll keep that sport over till the morrow; an' sh'd they do so, darn me, ef we don't disappoint 'em. Orest we git upon the spot, we'll gie 'em sport very diff'rent from that they'll be expectin'."

There was reason in what 'Lije said. His words were consoling to O'Neil; and, for a time, he rode on with a countenance more cheerful.

It soon became cheerless again, as he returned to reflect on the character of the Indians, who were supposed to have "struck" the caravan; more especially their chief, whose fame as a killer of white men was almost equaled by his reputation as a lover of white women. There was more than one story current among the trappers, in which the Yellow Chief had figured as a general among white-skinned gillish captives, who had fallen into his hands on their passage across the prairie.

With the remembrance of these tales coming fresh before his mind, O'Neil groaned again.

What if Clara Blackadder—in his memory still an angel—what if she should, at that moment, be struggling in the arms of a paint-bellied savage? Beauty in the embrace of a fiend! The reflection was terrible—odious; and, as it shadowed the young hunter's heart, he drove the spurs deep into the flank of his horse, and cried to his comrade, "Come on, Lije! come on!"

But the time had arrived when something besides haste was required of them. They were nearing the spot where the pillagers of the caravan were supposed to have made camp; and the trappers were too well acquainted with the wiles of prairie life to approach either men or animals in an open manner. They knew that no Indians, even in their hours of carousal, would leave their camp unguarded. A whole tribe never gets drunk together. Enough of them always stay sober to act as sentinels and videttes.

Safe as the Cheyenne chief and his fellow-plunderers might deem themselves—far away from any foe likely to molest them—they would, for all this, be sure to keep pickets around their camping-place, or scouts in its vicinity.

There was a bright daylight, for it was yet early in the afternoon. To attempt approaching the bivouac of the savages across the open plain, or even close skirting the mountains, could only lead to a failure of their enterprise. They would be sure of being seen, and, before they could get within striking distance, the Indians, if not disposed to fight, would be off, carrying along with them both their booty and their captives. Mounted on fresher horses than those ridden by the trappers, now panting and sweating after a long, continuous gallop, they could easily accomplish this.

There seemed but one way of approaching the Indian camp—by stealth; and this could only be done by waiting for the night and its darkness.

As this plan appeared to be the best, most of the trappers were in favor of adopting it. They could think of no other.

The thought of such long delay was agony to O'Neil. Was there no alternative?

The question was put to his comrade, 'Lije, while the discussion was in progress.

"Thur air a alternative," was the answer addressed to all, though to none who so welcomed it as his young friend.

"What other way?" demanded several voices, O'Neil's being the first heard.

"You see them mountings?" said 'Lije, pointing to a range that had just opened to their view.

"Sartin; we ain't all blind," replied one of the men. "What about them?"

"You see that hill that sticks out thur, wi' the trees on top o't, just like the hump o' a bufler bull."

"Well, what of it?"

"Close by the bottom o' that, them Injuns air camped—that be, ef this chile hain't made a mistake 'bout thar intentions. We'll find 'em thur, I reck'n."

"But how are we to approach the place without their spying us? There ain't a bit o' cover on the prairie for miles round."

"But there are kiver on the mounting itself," rejoined 'Lije. "Penty o' tree kiver, as ye kin see."

"Ah! you mean for us to make a circumbendibus over the ridge, and attack 'em from the back-side. Is that it, 'Lije?"

"That's it," ironically answered the old trapper.

"You must be mistaken about that, Orton," put in Black Harris, supposed to be the sagest among "mountain men." "We might get over the ridge 'ithout bein' noticed, I reck'n; but not with our animals. Neythur hoss nor mule can climb up yonder. And if we leave them behind, it'll take longer than to wait for the night. Besides, we mightn't find any tracks up among the rocks. They look, from here, as if they had been piled up by giants as had been playing jack-stones wi' 'em."

"So they do, Harry," replied 'Lije, "so do they. But, f'r all that, there's a coven kin find a path to crawl through among 'em, an' that's 'Lije Orton. I hain't trapped all round by'r 'ithout knowin' the near cuts; an' there's a way over that ridge w'll fetch us strait eastward to the Injan campin'-ground, an' 'ithout their pursuin' our approach in the closest o' sunlight. Beside, it'll bring us into such a position that we'd hev the skunks 'ithin reach o' our guns,

before they know any thin' 'bout our bein' near 'em. Beside, too, it'll save time. We kin get thur long afore dark, so as to have a good chance o' lookin' through the sights o' our rifles."

"Let us go that way," simultaneously cried several voices, the most earnest among them being that of O'Neil.

No one dissenting, the mountain path was determined upon.

Continuing along the plain for a half-mile further, the trappers dismounted, *cackled* their animals among the rocks, and commenced ascending the steep slope--'Lije still acting as their guide.

CHAPTER XV.

RETALIATION IN KIND.

THE thrill that passed through the captives as Blue Dick discovered to them his identity was not so startling to all. With Blount Blackadder and Snively, his words, as well as his acts, had long since led to his recognition. Also among the slaves were some who remembered that scene in the courtyard of the old home plantation, when he had been subjected to the punishment of the pump. Despite their supposed obtuseness, they were sharp enough to connect it with the very similar spectacle now before their eyes; and, on hearing the command, "Give him a double dose," more than one remembered having heard the words before. Those who did were not happy, for they also recalled their own conduct on that occasion, and were apprehensive of just retaliation from the hands of him whom they had so often seen. Seeing how their young master had been served, they became sure of it; still more when the overseer, Snively, was submitted to the same cruel castigation, and after him, the huge negro who had worked the pump while when Blue Dick was being *douched*.

Both these received the double dose, and more than double. As Snively was unloosed from the cross, and dragged out

beyond the water-jet, the hideous gash along his cheek looked still more hideous from its blanching.

And the negro, thick as was his skull, roared aloud, and felt as though his head had been laid open. He snail so on repeating his scream. The grin upon his face was no longer that of glee, as when he himself was administering the punishment. It was a contortion that told of soul-suffering agony.

He was not the last to be so served. Others were taken from the crowd of slaves, not indiscriminately, but evidently selected one after another. And the rest began to see this and to believe they were to be tortured. Some were soaced by the thought that to others gave keen apprehension. They had not all joined their fellow-slave, when he was himself suffering. Only the guilty were stricken with fear.

And now had they to die; for, one after another, as the chief pointed them out, they were seized by his satellites, dragged from among their trembling fellow-captives, and in turn tied to the pine-tree cross. And there were they kept, till the cold melted snow from Pike's Peak, descending on their crowns, caused them to shriek out in agony.

All this while were the Cayennes looking on; not gravely, as becometh the Indian character, but laughing like the spectators of a Christian's punishment, capering over the ground like his slaves, and yelling until the rocks gave back the madness of their wild mirth in wild, unceasing echoes.

Never had the red man seen his eastern the murderer assigned into their tribe, who, by brave deeds, had won confidence over them. Never before had he treated them to such a spectacle, or soared to their savage natures, and with their all commiseration with their fate for the pleasure.

But even at this period of their history, when the chiefs of the Cayennes were now in a sort of accord with the white men, and performing a noble duty, the young filioustering "warriors" were not fully restrained from acts of hostility.

The Yellow Chief, who had stayed among them coming from afar, who had married the bride of their tri—the bitterest danger of their "men-of-war,"—who surpassed all of them in his hatred of the white race, and more than once had led them in a like murderous maraud against them

hereditary enemies, was the man after their heart, the type of a patriotic savage.

Now, more than ever, had he secured their esteem; now, as they saw him, with cruel, unsparring hand, deal out castigation to their pale-faced captives; a punishment so quaintly original, and so terribly painful, that they would not have believed in it, but for the cries of keen agony uttered by those who had to endure it.

To Cheyenne ears they were sounds so sweet and welcome, as to awake the intoxicated from their alcoholic slumbers, and call them up to become sharers in the spectacle. Drunk and sober alike danced over the ground, as if they had been so many demons exhibiting their salutatory skill upon the skull-paved floors of Acheron.

Nor was their laughter restrained when they saw that the punishment, hitherto confined to their male captives, was about to be extended to the women. On the contrary, it had increased their fiendish glee. It would be a variety in the performance—a new sensation—to see how the latter should stand it.

And they did see; for several of the female slaves—some of them still young, others almost octogenarian “warriors”—were ruthlessly led up to the stake, to that martyrdom of water painful as fire itself!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WHITE WOMEN.

For more than two hours was the fiendish spectacle kept up—a tragedy of many acts; though, as yet, none of them ending in death.

But neither actors nor spectators knew how soon this would be the termination of it.

So horrified were the captives, they could not calmly reflect; though, from the rumbling around them, they felt itself given them to expect very little more.

The discrimination shown in their punishment led some to entertain a hope. All, both blacks and whites, now knew with whom they had to deal; for, in a whispered conversation among themselves, the story of Blue Dick was told to those of the emigrant party who had never heard of him before.

And the slaves who were not of the Blackadder plantation, as also the white men to whom these belonged, began to indulge in the belief that they were not to be made victims to the vengeance of the mulatto.

They were allowed time enough to reflect; for, after some ten or a dozen of the female slaves had been *douched*, to the delight of the young Choyennes, and the apparent satisfaction of their chief, there was an interlude in the atrocious performance. The renegade, as if contented with revenge—at least, for the time—had turned away from the waterfall, and gone inside his tent.

Among the three captive groups, there was none in which apprehension could be more keen than that composed of the white women. They had to fear for something dearer to them than life—their honor.

Several of them were young, and more than one good-looking. Not to know it they could not have been women.

Up to that hour the savages had not insulted them. But this gave them no assurance. They knew that these loved women were then women; and the whisky taken from the despoiled warriors had hitherto diverted the savages from intruding upon them.

It could not long continue, for they had been told of something besides this. The character of cold incontinence given to the *Choyennes*—a trait figured in the early history of their country—had been applied to the fiery *Choyennes* of the present. All they had ever heard of these savages being so temperate was a lie; and the white women, most of them wives, were thinking of danger to their husbands, were also apprehensive about their own.

Some were married to the chief, Chief Blackadder, suffered more than any of them. She had seen her father's corpse lying upon the pointed sword, buried in its own blood. She had just ceased to tell of her brother subjected to a punishment

she now knew to be fearfully painful; and she was reflecting what might be in store for herself.

She remembered Blue Dick well. As his master's daughter—his young mistress—she had never been unkind to him. But she had never been specially kind; for some influence, exerted by the slave Sylvia, had rather turned her against him. Not to actual hostility; only to the showing of disfavor. The truth was, that the heart of the planter's daughter had been so occupied with its own affairs—its love for the young stranger O'Neil—it had little room for any other thought.

The same thought was still there; not dead, but surmounted by a woe-begone despair, that, even now, hindered her from feeling, keenly as she otherwise might have done, the danger of the situation.

Still she was not insensible to it. The Cheyenne chief in passing, had glared angrily upon her, with an expression she remembered more than once to have seen in the eyes of Blue Dick. As Sylvia's mistress, as the friend and confidant of the quadroon slave, more than all, as the sister of Blount Blackaller, she could not expect either grace or mercy from the mulatto. She knew not what she might expect. It was painful to think, still more to converse, upon it with the women around her.

These did not talk or think of her fate. It was sorrow enough for them to reflect upon their own. But she had more to dread than any of them, and she knew it. With that quick instinct peculiar to women, she knew she was the conspicuous figure in the group.

As the horror of the situation came palpably before her mind, she trembled. Strong as she was, and self-willed as through life she had been, she could not help having the keenest apprehensions.

But along with her trembling came a determination to escape, even with Sylvia's example and failure before her face!

She might be overtaken. No matter. It could not increase the misery of her situation. It could not add to its danger. At the worst, it could only end in death; and death she would accept sooner than degradation.

She was but slightly tied. In this the Indians do not

much pains with their women captives. It is not often these make any effort to get free, and when they do, it costs but little trouble to track and recapture them.

Still there have been instances on the prairies where brave, brave women—even delicate ladies—have contrived to escape from such captivity, and in a manner almost miraculous. The early history of the West teems with such episodes; and she, a child of the West, had heard them as part of her nursery lore. It was their remembrance that was partly inspiring her to make the attempt.

She did not communicate the design to her fellow-captives. They could not aid, but only obstruct her. Under the circumstances, it would be no selfishness to forsake them.

One night came its will, hopeless chance. And so, too, would soon, but for a thought that had stolen into her mind. It had been suggested by the sight of an animal standing near. It was her own horse, that had been appropriated by one of the Indians. He was standing with the saddle on, and the bridle resting over the crutch. A riding gear new to them, but caught the fancy of the Indians, and they had left it on for exhibition.

Could Ben leader knew her horse to be a fleet one.

"O, on his back," thought she, "I might gallop out of their reach."

She had a thought beyond. She might get upon the trace which the wagons had followed from Bent's Fort. She believed she could remember, and return along it.

And still another thought. At the fort she had seen many white men. They might be induced to come back with her, and rescue her and the captives—her brother.

All this passed through her mind in a few short moments, and before it was so passing, she slipped off the covers, that were but loosely lapped around her delicate limbs, and prepared for a start.

Now was the time, while the chief was inside his tent.

CHAPTER XVII.

A FLIGHT URGED BY DESPAIR.

"Now or never!" was the reflection that passed through Clara Blackadder's mind: and she was in the act of springing up from her recumbent position, when a circumstance occurred seeming to say, "never!"

The mulatto had stepped out from the canvas screen, and stood in front of it; no longer robed in the costume of an Indian chief, but wearing the same dress he had worn as a slave on the Mississippi plantation. It was the same as on that morning when she had been a spectator of his punishment. He was the Blue Dick of bygone days, only taller and stouter. But the coarse jean coat and cotton trousers, of copperas stripe, had been ample enough not to be outgrown.

"You'll know me better now, my old masters and fellow-slaves," he shouted out, with a decisive laugh. "And you, too, my young mistress," he continued, turning toward the group of white women, and approaching it in a triumphant stride. "Ha, Miss Clara Blackadder! You little thought, when one fine day you stood in the porch of your father's fine house, looking calmly on while I was in torture, that, some other fine day, your turn would come for being tortured too. *It has come!* The rest, including your dear little brother, have had a taste—only a taste of what's in store for them. I've kept you to the last, because you are the dearest. That's always the way in a case of revenge. Ha! ha! ha!"

The young lady made no reply. In the lightning glance cast upon her, she saw there was no hope for mercy, and that worst of all would be thrown away. She only cowered, cowering before him.

But even at that moment she did not lose presence of mind. She still contemplated springing up, and making toward her horse.

Airs! it seemed impossible. He stood right in the way, and could have caught her before she had taken three steps.

And he did catch her before she had made one—even before she had attempted to stand erect.

"Come!" cried he, roughly clasping her waist, and jerking her to his feet. "Come with me. You've been a looker on long enough. It's your turn now to afford sport for others."

And, without waiting for a reply, he commenced dragging her in the direction of the waterfall.

She made no resistance. She did not scream, nor cry out. She knew it would be idle.

But there was a cry sent from the other side of the glen—a sudden sob, wild and unearthly that it caused the mulatto to stop suddenly, and look in the direction whence it came.

Rising out from among the crowd of negro captives, was one who might have been the oldest of them—a woman of near seventy years of age, and that weird aspect common among the old crones of the plantation. With hollow cheeks, and white wood heavily set over her temples, with long, shrivelled arms extended beyond the scant rag of garment which the planters had permitted to remain upon her shoulders, she looked like some African Heente, selected for the occasion.

Despite her frightful aspect, hers was not an errand of destruction, but mercy.

"Let go that ob de young miss!" she cried, pressing forward to the spot. "You let go her ob her, Bow Dick. You touch a hair ob her head! If you do, you a fiend—a murderer. You! I was dan dat. You be a-murderin' ob your own fresh an' brud!"

"What do you mean, you old fool?" cried the mulatto, at the same time showing, by his looks, that her words had surprised him.

"What do de fool mean? She mean what she hab jus say. Dese ob you do harm to Miss Anna, you harm you own skin!"

The mulatto started as if he had received a stab.

"My skin?" he exclaimed. "You're gabbling, Nan. You're old, and have lost your senses."

"No, Bow Dick; Nan hasn't lost none ob her senses, nor her head, nor her skin. She'madder dan'tin' you on her skin, when you wa' ob pleasuring, not bigger dan a 'possum."

She nuss Miss Crara too 'bout de same time. She know who boaf come from. You boaf child'en ob de same fader—ob Mass' Blackadder; an' she you sista. Ole Nan tell you so. She willin' sw'ar it."

For a time Blue Dick seemed stunned by the startling revelation. And equally so she, whose wrist he still held in angry clasp. It was a tale strange and new to both of them.

But the asseverations of the old negress had in them the earnestness of truth; more so at such a moment. And along with this were some gleams of light, derived from an indefinite source—instincts or dreams—perhaps some whisperings over the cradle—that served to confirm her statement.

Revoltin' as was the thought of such a relationship to the delicate sensibilities of the young lady, she did not attempt to deny it. Perhaps it might be the means of saving her brother and herself; and, for the first time, she turned her eyes toward the face of Blue Dick in a glance of appeal.

It fell in sudden disappointment. There was no mercy there—no look of a brother! On the contrary, the countenance of the natchto—always marked by a harsh, sinister expression—seemed now more merciless than ever. His eyes were absolutely dancing with a demoniac triumph.

"Sister?" he cried, at length, sarcastically, hissing the word through his teeth. "A sweet sister! she who all my early life has been but my tyrant mistress! What if we are from the same father? Our mothers were different, and I am the son of my mother. A dear father, indeed, who taught me but to toil for him! And that an affectionate brother?"—here he pointed to Bount, who, restored to his fastenings, lay stretched on the grass—"who only delighted in torturing me; who ruined my love—my life! Sweet sister, indeed! you, who treated me as a menial and slave! Now shall you be mine! You shall sweep out my tent, wait upon my Indian wife, work for her, slave for her, as I have done for you. Come on, Miss Clara Blackadder!"

Fiercely grasping the young lady's wrist, he recommenced dragging her across the camp-ground.

An involuntary murmur of disapprobation rose from the different groups of captives. During their long, toilsome journey across the plains, Clara Blackadder had won the good

wishes of all—not only by her grace and beauty, but for many kindnesses shown to her traveling companions, black as well as white. And when they now saw her in the clutch of the unnatural monster, being led, as they supposed, to the terrible torture some of them had already experienced, one and all uttered exclamations against it. They were not certain that such was the fate intended by the spectral ringleader; they only guessed it by the direction in which he was conducting her.

Whatever might have been his purpose, it was prevented.

With a spring as if all the energies of youth had been restored to her enervated frame, the old nurse rushed upon him; and, clutching his throat in her long, bony fingers, caused him to let go his hold.

He turned upon her like an enraged tiger, and, after a short struggle, ending with a blow from his strong arm, old Nan fell flat upon the earth.

But on turning toward the girl to renew his grasp, he saw she was no longer within his reach! While he was struggling with the negroess, she had darted away from his side; and, springing upon the back of her own horse, was urging the animal in full gallop out of the gorge!

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE STALKERS ASTONISHED.

MAKING their way up the steep mountain-path, climbing over fallen tree-trunks, obstructed by thicket and scur, the hunters of Laramie got close to the cliff which, as 'Life Otton' well has said, served down on the crumpled-place of the Cheyennes.

They had ceased talking aloud, and communicated with one another only by signifiers. There was a deathlike stillness in the pure mountain air, and they knew that the slightest sound might make known their approach to the enemy.

They had thrown themselves into a deployed line, after the

manner of skirmishers, crouching silently among the stunted pines, and gliding rapidly forward where the ground was without cover. Orton was directing them by signs; O'Neil stepping close by his side, and near enough for the slightest whisper to be heard between them.

The young Irishman still kept impatiently urging the advance. Every moment of delay roused a moan to the heart of the lover. Over and over again came before his mind that ill-omened picture his fancy had painted—Olan Backdoor struggling in the embrace of a savage! And that savage the **Yellow Chief of the Cheyennes!**

These fancies were like the waves of a tempestuous sea, following one another at intervals. As each rose grimly before him, he came near groaning aloud. He was only restrained by knowing the necessity for silence. As a relief, he kept constantly whispering to his old comrade, and urging him to a more rapid advance.

"Don't rot it, Ned!" replied the latter; "don't be so hurried 'bout it. We'll git ther in good time, take this cull's word for it. Ther's plenty o' fever in the emigrant waters, I guess. Them Mississippi planters don't often go travelin' 'thout a good lot o' corn. An' as for the Injuns, they ain't ag'in' to trouble themselves 'bout women as long's the fever lasts. Don't you be uneasy; we'll git up time enuf to perfect the plan an' exterminate the skunks as they call 'em, you see if we don't."

"But why go creeping this way? Once upon the cliff we must declare ourselves. We can't get down among them, as you say; and since it must all be done with our rifles, the first shot will discover us."

"So it will; discover us to a certainty. But ther's jist the pint. That first shot must be delivered by all o' us at the same instinck o' time. Unless we make a better o' them, as the French trappers call it, they'd be off in the skin of a good's tail, prehaps takin' their prisoners along w' em. An' what 'ud we be to take 'em? Therfor, we must fix that as so'st every one may take sight on a different Injan at the same time; an' then, afore they kin git clear out o' the gully, we'd be loaded for a second shot. I guess that'll make 'em think o' somethin' else than totin' off their captives. Keep

y'er patience, young fella! Trust to ole 'Lije Orton, when he sez y'er girl air still safe an' soon'."

The anxious lover, despite his anxiety, could not help feeling confidence in the words thus whispered. More than once had he seen 'Lije Orton acting under circumstances of a like trying nature, and as often coming out triumphant. With an effort he restrained his impatience, and imitated the cautious approach of his comrade.

They were soon sufficiently near the edge of the cliff, to hear a murmur of voices rising up out of the valley. As the ears of all were well attuned to such sounds, they knew them to be the voices of Indians. And these could be no other than Yellow Chief, and his band of marauders.

A halt was made; and a hurried council held, about the best mode of making attack.

"There must be no'er a noise among ye," whispered 'Lije, "and no speakin' o' a word, till we've got one fire at 'em. Then charge y'er rid's ag'in, quick's ever you kin. Two sets o' shots oughter thin 'em, so they won't mind 'bout thar captives, nor anythin' else, 'ceptin' to streak it—that air, sech as be left o' 'em."

This counsel was delivered in a whisper, and in the same way passed along the line.

"Only one half o' ye fire at a time," continued 'Lije. "You fellows on the left shoot first. Let the t'others reserve for the second volley. 'Twon't do to waste two bullets on the red skins. Leave Yellow Chief to me. I hev got a ole score to settle wi' thet Injun."

With these precautions, communicated from left to right, the trappers once more advanced—no longer as skirmishers, but in line, and as near to one another as the inequality of the ground would permit.

They could now hear the voice of a man, who talked easily and in a tone of authority. They could even make out some of the words, for they were in English!

This gave them a surprise; but they had scarce time to think of it, when there arose a chorus of cries, uttered in quick, sharp succession, that told of some unusual occurrence. Among these were the screams of women.

At the same instant the tramping of hoofs resounded along

the rocks, as if a horse was going off at a gallop over the hard turf of the prairie. Then succeeded another chorus of yells—a confused din—and soon after the pattering of many hoofs, as of a whole troop of horses following the first.

The sound, reaching the ears of the trappers, carried their eyes out toward the plain: where they beheld a sight, that caused one and all of them wild throbbings of the heart. Upon the prairie, just clearing the scarped edge of the cliff, was a woman on horseback. At a glance they could tell it was a young girl; but as her back was toward them, they could see neither face nor features. She was in a lady's saddle; and urging her horse onward as if riding for life—her skirt and hair streaming loosely behind her.

There was one among them that knew who she was. The quick instinct of love told Edward O'Neil well the fugitive upon horseback was Clara Blackadder. His instincts were aided by remembrance. That magnificent head of hair, black as the plumage of a raven, was well remembered by him. It had often been before his fancy in the lone bivouac—at night entwining itself with his dreams.

"Oh, heavens!" he exclaimed, "it is Clara herself!"

"Y'er right, Ned," responded 'Lije, gazing intently after her. "Darned ef it ain't her, that very gurl! She's a-tryin' to git away from 'em. See! thar goes the hul o' the Injuns arter her, gallopin' like h—"

As Otten spoke, the pursuers began to appear, one after another passing outside the cliff-line—urging their horses onward with blows and loud vociferations.

Several of the trappers raised their rifles to the level, and seemed calculating the distance.

"For y'ar lives, don't shoot!" cautioned 'Lije, speaking in a constrained voice, and making himself understood by a wave of the hand. "It kin do ne'er a good now, but only spile all. Let 'em go off. Ef the gurl gits clear, we'll soon track her up. Ef she don't they're born' to bring her back, an' then we kin settle wi' 'em. I reck'n they're not all arter her. There's some o' the skunks still below. Let's jist see to them; an' then we kin lay out our plans for them's hev'ry rid out in the purshoot." 'Lije's counsel was unanimously accepted, and the gun-barrels brought down again.

"Lie close, boys," he said in a hoarse whisper, "while some o' us steads the trail and looks over. Hairy, spose you kin 'long wi' me."

His purpose was understood by Black Harris, who instantly volunteered to accompany the old trapper—his senior in years, and his equal in rank among the "mountain men."

"Now, boys!" muttered Life on leaving them, "be close as I've told you, and noder a word out o' one o' ye till we git back."

So, saying, he crept forward, Black Harris by his side—the two crouching on hands and knees, and with as much caution as if they had been approaching a herd of antelopes.

The glance of the others did not follow them. All eyes were turned downward to the prairie; watching the pursuit, now far off and still going further across the open plain.

But no one watched with such anxiety as O'Neil. It absorbed his whole soul, like some pent-up agony. His very breathing seemed suspended, as he crouched behind the dwarf cedar tree, calculating the distance between pursuers and pursued. How he regretted having left his horse behind him. What would he not have given at that moment to be on the back of his brave steed, and galloping to the rescue of his beloved?

Perhaps his suffering would have been still more acute, but for the war's just spoken by his old comrade. The girl would either get off, or be brought back: and either way, there was hope of saving her. With this thought to console him, he watched the spectacle of the pursuit with more equanimity. Still, watching it with eager eyes, he awaited the result of the reconnoissance.

Crouching slowly and cautiously along, O'Neil and Harris at length reached the edge of the cliff, and looked down into the valley below. A glance enabled them to comprehend the situation. It was just as they had conjectured. The white and black captives were in separate groups, guarded by some of the fiercest warriors of the Indian band, and these rocking over the ground half intoxicated.

"They'll be coming down now," said Life, "and we must be ready. Arise now, we kin kill 'em without much noise."

"Why not throw up the net, and shoot 'em, what they

stand? We can rub out every red-skin of 'em at a single volley."

"Sartin we could; but don't ye see, old boss, that 'ud niver do. Ye forget the gurl; an' she are the only one o' the haul lot wuth savin', I reckon; the only one I'd give a darn to waste powder for. Ef we war to fire a shot, the parshooers out yonner 'ud be sartin to hear it, and then good-by to the gurl—that is, if they git their claws on her ag'in."

"I see what you mean; an' you're right. We must bag this lot below, without makin' a rumpus; then we can set our traps for the others."

"Jess so, Harry."

"How are we to do it, think ye, 'Lije? We'll have to go back to whar we left our horses, and ride round by the open end of the valley. That way we'll have them shut up like sheep in a pen."

"No, Harry: we hain't time to go back for the anymols. Afore we ked git roun' thar, the parshooers mout catch the gurl and be comin' back. Then it 'ud be no go. I bethinks me o' a better way."

Black Harris waited to hear what it was.

"I know a pass," continued 'Lije, "by the which we may git down wi' a little stretchin' o' the arms. If we kin only reach bottom afore they see us, we'll make short work o' 'em. But we must be cunmin' 'bout it. Ef but one o' the skunks hev the chance to escape, the gurl 'll be lost sure. Thar ain't a second o' time to be wasted. Let's back to the boys, an' at oncest down inter the gully."

CHAPTER XIX.

SETTING A STRANGE SCENE.

RETREATING from the edge of the cliff with the same caution they had approached it, the two mountain men joined their companions in ambush. 'Lije, after making known his decision, then returned the pass of which he had spoken—a steep

ravine, the same up which Saively had made his vain attempt at escaping.

Screened by the scrub-oakars, the trapper party succeeded in descending it, without being perceived either by the Indians below, or the captives over whom these were keeping but careless watch.

Their sudden appearance upon the plain was a surprise to both; to the latter a joyful sight; to the former a terrible apparition—*for* they saw in it the quick harbinger of death.

No instant was lost by the assailants. On the moment of their first reaching the plain, they flung aside their guns; and drawing daggers and knives, went at the Indian sentinels, in a hurried but silent slaughter.

There was grappling, struggling, and shouts; but the attacking party overmastered these attacks; and in less than ten minutes the shouting ceased—since there was not a living Indian upon the ground to continue it. Instead was the green meadow strewed with dead bodies, every one of them showing a bronze-colored skin, horribly enameled with gashes or gouts of crimson blood!

The captives were in raptures of joy. They saw that their rescue was complete. The whites, both men and women, sprung to their feet, and struggled with their fastenings—wishing to have their arms free in order to embrace their protectors; while the negroes, none of whom were bound, came pouring forth out of the *enclosure*, where they had been kept, shouting up, up, and frenzied shouts.

"Keep y'ar ground an' stop y'ar damned shoutin'!" cried 'Tige, with a gesture waving them back. "Don't one o' ye stir out o' y'ar places. Back, back, I say! Stay as ye wur, till we gie ye the word. An' yea alser," he continued, running to the other side and checking the forward movement of the whites, "kum'er down jist as ye did afore. We kin't finish this show bizness yit. Ther's another scene o' it to kum."

Both negroes and whites were a little surprised, at being thus restrained from the full exhibition of their joy. But the earnest tone of the old trapper, sustained as it was by the gestures of his companions, had its effect upon them; and all at once covered back into their original position. What was

the intention they could not guess; but, released from the agony of fear, they were willing to wait for it with patience.

They soon beheld a spectacle, so strange as almost to restore them to terrified thought. They saw the dead bodies of the Indians raised from their recumbent position; set up beside their long spears, that had been previously planted in the ground; and lashed to these in such a manner as to sustain them in an erect attitude. They were distributed here and there over the swart, most of them close to the captives, as if still keeping guard over them! Those not so disposed of were dragged off and hidden away behind the large boulders of rock that lay at the base of the cliff.

"Now!" thundered the old trapper, addressing his speech to the captives, white as well as black, "ef one o' ye stir from the spot ye're in, or ventur's to show sign o' any thin' that's tak place, till ye git the word from me, ye'll hev a rifle bullet sent plum through ye. The girl hez got to be rescued 'thout harm done to her; an' I reck'n she's wuth more then the toll o' ye thagither. That's but one way o' savin' her, an' that's by y'ur keepin' y'ur heads shet up, an' y'ur hands 'thout stirrin' as much as a finger. So don't make neery movements, ef ye valy y'ur precious lives. Ye unnerstan' me?"

The captives were too much controlled to make rejoinder; but they saw, by the earnestness of the old trapper, that his commands were to be obeyed, and silently resolved to obey them.

After delivering the speech, 'Lige turned toward his trapper companions—all of whom knew what was meant, and who, without waiting word or sign, rushed toward their rifles—still lying on the ground.

In a few seconds they had regained them; and, in less than five minutes after, not a trapper was to be seen about the place. They had disappeared as suddenly as sprites in a pan-tomime; and the little valley seemed suddenly restored to the state in which it had been left, when the pursuers of Clara Blackadder swept out of it. Any one glancing into it at that moment could have had no other thought, than that it contained the captives of an emigrant train, with their Indian captors keeping guard over them.

CHAPTER XX.

A RIDE FOR MORE THAN LIFE.

NERVED by the fear of a terrible fall, did the escaping captive urge forward her swift horse, encouraging the animal both with words and caresses.

He knew a nervous one, and did his best. He seemed to know, also, why he was thus put to the top of his speed; for under such circumstances the horse seems to be stirred by something more than instinct.

The one riding by Clara Blackadder was a hunter, of the best Kentucky blood, and might have distanced any of the mustangs mounted by the Indians.

But there was another of the same race among his pursuers—one superior in size, strength and swiftness even to himself. It was the horse that had belonged to the young lady's brother, appropriated by Pine Dog, and now following with the mediator upon his back.

She did not know who. She only knew that one of the pursuers was a horse of superior caliber, and saw that the rest had fallen far behind. But, to her terror, she saw that this single horseman was gradually gaining upon her.

Had she been a strong man as I am not, she might have ridden up to the front and challenged. But she knew that the weakest of the Indian warriors would be more than a match for her, and if overtaken, she must succumb.

There was nothing for her but in the swiftness of her horse, and hence she was spurred on by encouragement, patting him on the neck, with her little hands, while striking the heel of her tiny boot against his sides.

The Kentucky hunter, according to this urgency, did his best; and Clara, too, as if his own life, as well as that of the rider, depended upon his speed.

It was all in vain, however. The the fleeing girl had made another mistake among the pursuers, the close clattering of hoofs gave warning that the hunter was rapidly drawing near; and

giving a glance back, she saw him, within less than a hundred lengths from the heels of her own horse.

She saw, besides, what rendered her fears yet more agonizing, that it was no Indian who was thus hotly pursuing her, but a man in a cotton shirt—he who was once a slave on her father's plantation. It was the Yellow Chief divested of his Indian habiliments, whom now, from what she had heard, she must believe to be her brother.

And a brother so cruel—so ~~generous~~! She trembled at the thought of the encounter!

It could not be avoided. In ten minutes more he was riding by her side.

Catching the bridle-rein of her horse, he drew the animal down upon its haunches—at once putting an end to the pursuit.

"No, no, Miss Clarey," he tauntingly cried out, "you shan't escape me so easily. You and I don't part company till you've served me and mine as I've served you and yours. It makes no matter if I *am* your brother, as old Nan says. You've got to come back with me, and see how *you'll* like being a slave. We keep slaves among the Indians just as you proud planters of Mississippi. Come along with me, and see!"

The young lady offered no resistance; nor did she say a word in reply. From what she had already seen and experienced, she knew it would be idle; and, resigning the rein, she permitted her horse to be controlled by him who had so easily overtaken her.

Turning about upon the prairie, captor and captive commenced retracing their tracks—the former sitting erect in his saddle, exultant of success; the latter with bent attitude, and eyes regarding the ground in a look of despair.

The Indians soon came up with the relief; and the captive was conducted back toward the scene where she had witnessed so much suffering.

And what was to be *her* name? She could not tell. She did not even think of it. Her spirit was crushed beyond the power of reflection.

The chase had occupied about half an hour. It took over twice the time for the Indians to return. The sun had already sunk low over the ridge of the Rocky Mountains, and it was

twilight within the little valley. But as they advanced, there was light enough for them to distinguish the other captives still lying on the grass, and their comrades keeping guard over them.

So thought the Yellow Chief, as, on reaching the crest of the ridge that ran transversely across the entrance, he glanced up the gorge, and saw the different groups to all appearance as he had left them.

Riding in the front, he was about to descend the slope, when an exclamation from the rear caused him to rein up and look back.

Several of the Indians, who had also mounted the ridge, were seen looking upon its summit, as if something was causing them surprise or alarm.

It could not be any thing seen in the encampment. Their faces were not turned in that direction, but along the mountain line to the northward.

The chief, rapidly wheeling about, trotted back to the summit; and there saw what was causing surprise to his followers; and what he, also, startled himself. Making out from the distance, and scattering over the prairie, was a troop of horses with riders. In such a place they might have passed for wild steeds, with some mules among them, for they were all dark. But they were near enough not to be mistaken for *mustangs*.

Besides, it was seen that they all carried saddles on their backs, and bridle over their necks—the reins of most of them trailing down to the grass.

The red men knew at a glance what it meant. It could be nothing else than the cattle of some camp that had “stampeded.”

An encampment of whites, or men of their own color? This was the question that, for a while, occupied their attention. As they were observing the movements of the animals.

It did not take them long to arrive at a conclusion. The strange horses, at first scattering in different directions, had now all turned toward a common center; and in a drove were now coming toward the spot occupied by the Indians. As they drew nearer the style of the saddles and other riding-gear told the Comanches that they were not Indians.

On first seeing them, the Yellow Chief had commanded his followers to take position behind a clump of trees standing upon the slope of the ridge, and hindering observation from the northward. There, for a time, they continued to observe the movements of the riderless horses.

What seemed strange was, that there were no men following them. If escaping from a camp in broad daylight, as it still was, they should have been seen, and some attempt made to recapture them. But as they strayed under the eyes of the Indians, no owners appeared to be after them.

For some time the Cheyenne chief and his followers sat gazing upon the cavallada, and endeavoring to explain its presence.

They could make nothing out of it, beyond the fact of its being a troop of stampeded animals.

And these could only have come from a camp of whites; for neither the horses nor their trappings were such as are in use among Indians. There were American horses among them, very different from the mustang of the prairies.

Had they got away in the night, when their owners were asleep? Not likely. Even thus they would have been trailed and overtaken. Besides, when the Indians first set eyes on them, they were galloping excitedly, as if freshly stampeded. They were now getting quieted after their scare—whatever it may have been—some of them, as they stepped along, stooping their heads to gather a mouthful of grass.

To the Indians it was a tempting sight. Horse-stealing is their regular profession, and success at it one of their boasted accomplishments. A young brave returning to his tribe with the captured horse of an enemy, is received almost with as much triumph and congratulation as if he carried the scalp of that enemy on the point of his spear.

They remained in ambush only long enough to see that there were no men in sight of the straying horses; and to reflect, that even if the owners were near, they must be afar off, and therefore helpless to hinder their cattle from being captured. A dash after the drove would do it. They were all provided with their lazes, and there could be little difficulty in securing the strays, to all appearance docile, as if jaded after a long journey. With the quickness of lightning these

thoughts passed through the minds of the marauders; and simultaneously they turned their eyes upon the chief, as if awaiting permission to ride off in pursuit. Not only was it given, but an instant afterwards to lead the chase.

Among the several old ponies capably was one; and, by Indian law, the owner belongs to him who takes it. The chance of adding two or three head horses to his stock was not to be slighted; and turning to one of the men who kept guard over the captured girl, he ordered him to take her on to the encampment.

Then, setting the example to his followers, he rode out from behind the cape, and, at an easy pace, directed his course toward the smouldering cañons.

CHAPTER XXI.

A PLEASANTER CAPTIVITY.

IF the sight of the straying horses had caused surprise to the Indians, not less surprised were they who, within the valley, were awaiting their approach. The trappers, placed in a well-contrived ambuscade, had seen Yellow Chief as he ascended to the crest of the ridge, and noticed his strange movements. Divided into two parties, they were stationed near the entrance of the gorge, about one-half their number on each side of it. The horses rode straight across the entrance into the fold of the rocky cliff, and thereby struck with scrub cedars, affording them a goodly crop of cornmeal. Their plan was to let the remaining parties pass on, and then rushing out, to close up the entrance, and thus cut off their retreat. Trusting to the thick grass, patches of brush, as well as the place where the supplies would be conveniently stored, they intended making a surprise upon the marauders, and a goodly crop of cornmeal as they themselves were not even near it. In the minds of these men, the thought of money to an Indian family has little value; less than a Chipewyan and less still for the brain of

braved by the Yellow Chief—a name lately distinguished for treacherous hostility toward trappers, as well as cruelty of every kind.

"Let's kill every red-skin of them!" was the resolution understood by all, and spoken by several, as they separated to take their places in ambuscade. When they saw the Indians mount upon the summit of the ridge, the chief already descending, they felt as if their design was soon to be accomplished. They were near enough to the savages to make out the expression upon their countenances. They saw no signs denoting doubt. In five minutes more the unconscious enemy would be through the gap, and then—

And then was it, that the exclamation was heard from those upon the hill, causing the chief suddenly to turn his horse and ride back.

What could it mean? Not one of the trappers could guess. Even 'Lige Onion was puzzled by the movement.

"That must be something queer on t'other side," he whispered to O'Neil, who was in ambush by his side. "That 'ere movement can't a be from any thing they've seed by n. They wa'n't lookin' this way. Darn me, if I ken make out what's stopped 'em!"

Of all those awaiting the approach of the Indians, no one suffered so much from seeing them halt, as the young Irishman. For the first time in five years he had a view of that face, almost every night appearing to him in his dreams. She was near enough for him to trace the lineaments of those features, indelibly impressed upon his memory. If he saw change in them, it was only that they appeared more beautiful than ever. The wan hue of sadness and the pallor of complexion, natural to a daughter of the South, had been replaced by a red suffusion upon her cheeks, caused by the chase, the capture, and the terrible excitement of the situation; and she seemed to grow with beauty. And there was something that at the moment rendered her still more beautiful in the eyes of O'Neil. During the interval of inaction since entering the Indian encampment, he had found time to place himself in communication with some of the white captives, her companions on the journey. From them he had learnt enough to know, that Clara Blackwelder was yet unweakened. Some-

thing, too, of her mood of habitual melancholy, as if there was a veil in her heart, none of them understood!

As he next reached the cedar-trees, expectant of her return, he had indulged in sweet conjectures as to its cause; and when he saw her upon the ridge, riding down as it were into his arms, a thrill of delightful anticipation passed over his spirit. He could scarce restrain himself from rushing forward to receive her; and it was with difficulty the old trapper could keep him steady in his concealment.

Still more calm as the Indians halted on the hill.

"They may ride off again," said he, in an agitated whisper, "or they may go to the contrary." "Supposing they suspect our presence? They may gallop off, and take her along with them? We have no horses to follow. We should never overtake them afoot."

"You must let it go, Ned, for 'em now. They're ayont the camp of our guns. If they git a glamp' o' one o' us, they'll be sure to stop. Don't show the tip o' y'er nose, Ned; for y'ur life, don't!"

The counsel might not now be heeded. O'Neil was in an agony of impatient apprehension. It seemed so easy to rush up to the summit of the ridge, and rescue her he so dearly loved. He felt as if he could have outrun the swiftest horse, and have vanquished the fiercest band of savages that surrounded her!

Yielding to the impetuosity of his long constrained passion, he would have made the suicidal attempt, had he not been stopped by the next movement of the Indians, who, to the surprise of all, both hunters and trappers, were seen to turn their backs upon the campment, leaving the young girl in the charge of a single savage! Even then O'Neil found it difficult to restrain himself from being cut from his ambush and rushing forward to follow. It seemed now so easy to rescue her!

The old trapper was again compelled to the force, throwing his arms round her, and carrying him to his place.

"A good one, ye say?" was he asked though not very complimentary speech, thrust into O'Neil's ear. "Hev patience, ye hunter, and she'll be mixt right into y'ur arms, like a barked squirrel from the branch o' a tree. Hish!"

The last exclamation was simultaneous with a movement on the part of the Indian who had been left in charge of the captive. In obedience to the hurried order of his chief, the savage had taken the bridle of her horse, and commenced leading the animal down the slope in the direction of the ravine, his eyes straying over the ground of the encampment.

Before entering the gap, he looked ahead! The silence there seemed somewhat to astonish him. It was strange there was no movement. He could see several of his comrades lying upon the grass and others standing over the captives, these still in their places just as he remembered them, when starting forth on the pursuit.

The Indians upon the ground seemed natural enough. They were those who had drunk too freely of the white man's fire-water. But the guards standing erect—leaning upon their long lances—it was odd they should be so silent, so motionless! He knew his comrades to be trained to a certain stoicism; but, considering the exciting scenes that had occurred, this was beyond expectation.

For all, the thing caused him no suspicion. How could he have a thought of what had transpired in his absence?

He advanced without farther pause, leading the captive's horse, till he had passed through the gap of the gorge. Whether he then saw enough to tell him of the trap into which he had fallen can never be known. If he did, he had no time either to reflect upon, or escape from it. A man, gliding silently out from the bushes, spring like a panther upon the crop of his horse, and before he could turn to see who thus assailed him, a bowie-knife had gone deep into his dorsal ribs, causing him to drop dead to the ground without uttering a groan!

It was the bowie-knife of old Life Otton that had inflicted the fatal stab.

At the same instant another man, rushing out from the same cover, clasped the captive girl in his arms, and tenderly lifted her from the saddle.

She was surprised, but not terrified. There could be no more terror there. If there had, it would have passed in a moment, when in her deliverer she recognized one who, for five long years, had been alike the torture and solace of her thoughts.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SCENE RE-ARRANGED.

EDWARD O'NEIL held Clara Blackadder in his arms. He now knew she loved, and had been true to him, though not from any words that passed between them.

There was scarce time for them to do more than pronounce one another's names; but the glance exchanged was eloquent to the hearts of both. Each saw in the other's eyes, that the old weakness was still there, strengthened, if aught changed, by the trials through which they had passed.

Almost on the instant of their coming together they were again pursued by the troopers; who, with 'Lige Orton and Edw. Hunt, surrounded them, and hastily commenced re-arranging the baggage. Every moment they might expect the return of the Indians. A scout, who had hurried up to the crest of the ridge, approached back why they had ridden off.

With the quick perception common to men of their calling, they at once comprehended all. They remembered that in their haste, they had not slightly scared their horses. Something, some sort of wild beast, perhaps a grizzly bear, had got among them, causing the stampede. It was an occurrence not new to them.

It only increased their thirst for vengeance against the detestable Chrysothos, and made them more than ever determined on a successful expedition to the predatory land.

"Let's not touch 'em, or try to skin 'em!" was the counsel passed around.

"Well, we can't sell our horses anyhow!"

"Well, we can't sell our horses, but our horses too, to re-
demptory us for our freedom. But, boys! 'twon't do to go
foolish about it. Though that's no fear o' these hyur skunks
and all that, we must take precautions for all that. This
here is what we must do like the rest o' 'em. When that
big day comes we'll be ready to go 'em that redemption."

The others knew what 'Life meant, and hastened to reset the stage for the next scene of the sanguinary drama.

While the scout on the crest of the ridge kept them warned as to the movements of the Indians, the others were busy placing the tableau that was to greet them on their return. The young lady was directed to assume a half-reclining attitude on the grass—her horse still saddled standing near. Close by was the dead body of the savage to whose keeping she had been intrusted; not seeming dead, but propped life-like by the side of his own horse, as if still keeping guard over the captive. All was arranged in less than ten minutes of time. These rude mountain men are ready at such *ruses*. No wonder their wits should be quick and keen; their lives often depend upon the successful execution of similar schemes.

When every thing was fixed to their satisfaction, the trappers returned to their ambush; as before, distributing themselves into two parties—one for each side of the gorge. A white was still kept upon the top of the ridge, that was not the man first deputed for the performance of this duty. There were now two of them—Black Harris and 'Life O'Neil.

It was an interval of strange reflection with the young Irishman O'Neil. Before his eyes—almost within reach of his arms—upon the grassy sward, he saw lying that fair form which for long absent years had remained vividly etched in his memory. How he longed to go nearer, and embrace her! And all the more that he perceived her glance turned toward the spot where he lay concealed, as if endeavoring to penetrate the leafy screen that separated them. How he longed for the final event, that would terminate this red tragedy, and bring them together again, in life never more to be parted! It was a relief, as well as joy to him, when his old comrade, O'Neil, close followed by Black Harris, was seen hastily descending the slope, their gestures showing that the horse-hunt was over, and the savages were riding back toward the encampment.

"Now, boys?" said 'Life, looking to both sides of the gorge, and addressing the trappers in a cautionary whisper. "O' ye! jist keep yer selves perfectly cool for about ten minutes longer, an' wait till ye git the word from Black Harry

of myself, you'll have a chance o' wipin' out any scores you may have run up toward yourselves an' Yellow Chief. Don't let a word of your own trigger till the last of the cursed varmints have got over past the mouth o' this hyar gully. An' then, when you hear the sign from me. It'll be the crack o' my rifle. After that, the Indians ain't likely to hev any chance, an' you kin go in, an' give 'em eternal damnation."

In ten seconds after he had ceased speaking not a trapper was to be seen near the Indian encampment; only the captives, with their captors standing over them, surrounded by a silence as of death. It was like the ominous calm that comes between two gusts of a storm, all the more awful from the contrasting silence.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE STAMPEDERS CAPTURED.

In starting the chase of the straying *caribou*, the Cheyennes did not go off at full speed. The spectacle of over twenty horses scattered and straggling, wandering about without riders or any sense of the sign of an owner following after them, was not so much calculated to excite astonishment to the stampeder as to arouse their instincts of caution. And still, it was the hope of an easy prey, with the design of drawing them into a trap. Partly for this reason, and partly because the Cheyennes were not to be scared into a second flight, and partly because of the knowledge of capture, the Cheyennes followed them slowly and deliberately.

At last, when the Cheyennes saw no white men appearing, they began to move forward, and as they looked back upon the straggling herd, they saw upon the scattering horses the white men's horses, as the white men's horses were called, and as they came erect, and snorting noise, and the signs of a fight.

For a moment there was a confused movement upon the plain—a sort of irregular tournament, in which horses ridden by lucky riders, and others without any, were

mingled together and galloping toward every point of the compass; long, slender ropes, like snakes, suddenly uncoiled, were seen circling through the air; wild cries were heard, sent forth from a score of savage throats—the clamor increased by the shrill neighing of horses and the shriller hincrying of the mules—while the firm prairie turf echoed the tread of over a hundred hoofs.

And soon this tableau underwent a change. The dark, moving mass became scattered over a wider surface, and here and there could be seen, at intervals apart, the oft-described spectacle of a horseman using the lasso: two horses at opposite ends of a long rope stretched taut between them, tails toward each other, one of them standing with feet firmly planted, the lasso fast to a stapled ring in the tree of his saddle; the other prostrate upon the ground, with the rope wound around his neck, no longer struggling to free himself, **but convulsively to get breath.**

And soon again the tableau became changed. The captured steeds were whipped back upon their feet, and their captors once more got into a clump together, each leading a spare horse, that followed without farther resistance.

Some had none; while others, more fortunate or skillful, had save even in making a noble race during the quick scramble.

After the more serious work of the morning, it was a light and pleasant interlude for the young Cheyennes, and as they returned toward their camp, they were full of joyous glee.

Still were their thoughts damped with some suspicion of danger. The novelty of such an easy razzia, had in it also something of mystery; and as they rode slowly back over the prairie again, they cast anxious glances toward the north—the point from which the stampeded horses had come.

But no one was in sight—there was no sign of a human being!

Were the owners of the lost horses asleep? Or had they been strack dead, before the scattering commenced?

The mutual congratulations of the savages, on the handsome coup they had made, were restrained by the mystery that surrounded it; and, with mingled feelings of gladness

and apprehension, they once more approached the spot, where, as they supposed, their captives and captives awaited them.

They went with as much speed as the red horses would allow them. Their chief, however, as he was coming on, suspected that he might be deceived. Where there was smoke there should be fire; and thinking of this old adage, he knew that while there were over twenty captives there must be a large number of men not far off—men who could only be enemies. Now that the animals were in his possession he was sure of their owners being white. The prisoners, indeed, and other trophies were such as are never, or only occasionally used by the re-skinned cavaliers of the frontier.

To gather up the spoils taken from the emigrant train, along with the captives, and take speedy departure from the place, was now his design.

He was thinking of the triumph that awaited him on his return to the head-men of the great Cheyenne tribe; of the welcome he would receive having back such a booty—horses, spoils, prisoners, these last to be distributed as slaves; of the great play in the nation, his promotion among the warriors, and the hope some day to become head-chief of the Cheyennes; and these thoughts passing through his mind made him highly exultant.

And there was one other thought—revenge over his enemies in every way—those by whose tyranny and persecution he had been driven from his home, and along with it honor, among the red men of the wilderness.

His thoughts were not sweet joy, thus reveling in revenge; and as he rode back toward the camp, where he knew his victims awaited him, he might have been heard muttering to himself:

"They shall serve me, as I have served them. And she who is called my sister—she shall be my slave!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

FINALE.

THE sun was already close down to the summit of the *sierra*, when the Yellow Chief and his followers once more surmounted the ridge that brought them in sight of the encampment. Although the daylight was still lingering around them, the little glen and the gap leading into it were obscured under the purple shadows of approaching night.

There was light enough left for the Indians however to discover the salient features of the scene. They could see the various groupings of their prisoners, with their comrades standing sentry over them; the white men on one side; the women near; and on the opposite edge of the valley, the saddle crowd, some seated, some standing—in all respects, apparently, as they had parted from them when starting on the pursuit of Clara Blackadder.

Apart from all the rest they saw her, with the Choctaw keeping watch close by, his hand clatching the withers of his horse.

The picture was complete. Nothing seemed wanting. No one was there who should not have been; nor any one missing. Who could have had suspicion, that close to those silent groupings there were others equally silent, but unseen and unsuspected? Not the young Cheyenne braves returning with their captured horses; not the daring chief at their head.

Without the slightest warning of the surprise that awaited them, they passed through the gap, and on the level meadow took all the spot occupied by the prisoners.

It was not until they had drawn up amidst the captive groups that things seemed a little strange to them. Why were their comrades so still, so silent? They did not think of them lying stretched along the grass—in all about a dozen. They had left them there, and knew that they were intoxicated. But the guards standing erect—why were these so unemonstrative. It was a thing unusual. Returning with each spoil, they might expect to have been hailed by a pean of congratulations. There was not even a salute!

It was a puzzle—a mystery. Had there been a better light, it might sooner have been solved. The blood sprinkled here and there over the grass; the gashes that would have been visible on the bodies of the sentinels; their stiff, set attitudes and ghastly faces—all would have been apparent. But over all was the veil of a fast-darkening twilight, and through its obscurity only the outlines of their figures could be traced, in positions and attitudes seeming natural enough. It was the absence of all motion coupled with the profound silence that seemed strange, ominous, appalling!

“Waboga!” cried the chief, addressing himself to the Choctaw who stood guard over the girl. “What means this? Why do you stand there like a stump? Why do you not speak?”

No answer from Waboga!

“Dog!” cried the mulatto, “if you don’t make answer, I’ll have you nailed to that cross you have yourself erected. Once more I ask you: what is the meaning of this nonsense?”

The threat had no effect upon Waboga. It elicited no answer—not even the courtesy of a sign!

“Slave!” shouted the chief, leaping from his horse, and rushing toward the silent sentry, “I shall not give you the grace of a trial. This instant shall you die!”

As he spoke a blade glistened in his hand, which, as his gestures showed, was about to be buried in the body of Waboga.

The sentry stood staunch, apparently regardless of the death that threatened him!

The chief stayed his hand, surprised at the unparalleled coolness of the Choctaw.

Only for a moment: for as he stood regarding him, now close up to the body, he saw what explained all—a gash great as he could have himself inflicted!

Waboga was already dead!

The horse upon which the Choctaw was leaning, scared by the threatening gesture, shied to one side, and the lifeless form fell heavily to the earth!

The knife dropped from the hands of the Cheyenne chief and, with a wild, abstracted air, he turned toward his followers, to seek an explanation.

But before a word could be spoken all was explained.

A cordon of dark forms was seen closing up the entrance

of the valley; the word "Fire!" was heard, followed by a serried sheet of flame, and the sharp "crack, crack, crack," proclaiming the discharge of a score of rifles.

It was the last sight seen by the Yellow Chief—the last sound heard by him before passing into eternity!

And the same with his freebooting band. Not one of them went alive out of that valley, into which the trappers had decoyed them!

The emigrants continued on to California, now with diminished numbers; for along with the leader, several others had been killed in the attack upon the caravan.

But, besides the dead, there was one living who went not with them. Now that her father was no more, there was no one to hinder Clara Blackadder from staying behind, along with the man of her choice; no reason why she should not return with him to the seats of civilization.

And she did so; not to share with him an humble home, but a residence far more splendid than the old plantation house in the "Choctaw Purchase." As the Irish trapper had declared it, Edward O'Neil was one of the "Onales of Tipperary, a gentleman on both sides av the house"; and in due time the property belonging to both sides of the house became his.

It might be chivalry, that he did not take his young Southern wife there, where she might feel lonely in a land of strangers. But it gave equal evidence of good sense that he sold off his Tipperary estates, and invested the money in the purchase of town-lots upon an islet he had learned to love, even more than the "gem of the seas." It was the isle of Manhattan.

There he still lives, happy in the companionship of his beautiful and faithful wife; cheered by sweet children, and, at intervals, by the presence of his old comrade, 'Lije Orton; who, now that railroads have penetrated the far prairies, comes occasionally to pay him a visit, and keep posted up in the lore of the "Mountain men."

THE END.

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